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A Quality Communications magazine

#158 MAY 2003

Inside this issue

COVER: Twin set (no pearls). *Maxtrix Reloaded* is going to be huge. We all know it. That's why it's the cover to our first issue of **Toy Max**. Which gave us the irresistible chance to catch up on Matrix comics in this very issue. See page 14

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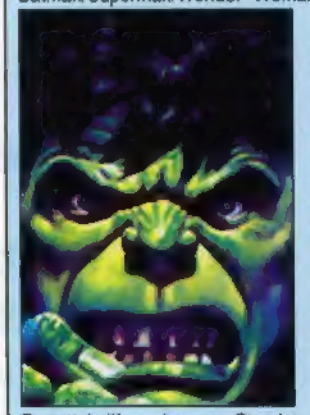

NEWS INTERNATIONAL: Marvel offers hope to newcomers with relaunch of creator-owned Epic imprint... Beckett boosts its nascent comics line with **Terminator** licence... Wolverine and Doop team up... **Grendel** creator explores Batman/Superman/Wonder Woman triangle... Gemstone plans manga-sized Disney line... *Hulk* movie prompts wealth of spin-offs... Dan DiDio takes control of DC Universe from Mike Carlin... Dark Horse reissues *Spirit* creator's first... WildStorm offers more **Thundercats**... **Whitechapel Freak** creator puts SF slant on Victorian legend... Doubleday drops its graphic novel line... Rival publishers offer Alan Moore titles... Second Todd McFarlane title for Sam and Twitch... **Birds of Prey** gets new creative team... Witchblade gets animation-style makeover... plus much more. 5
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Sez Dez

Editorial
Dez Skinn

THIS YEAR is shaping up to be a new publishing highpoint for the coverage of comics in the UK. We're constantly told by our readers that they prefer magazines about comics to the real thing, which could explain the upsurge in reporting on the industry.

The increasingly inappropriately-named Comics Creators Guild justifies its existence with the again reborn **Comics Forum,** offering the most eclectic coverage of comics past and present that you'll find anywhere on the planet.

From the Tomb continues to offer unbelievably in-depth features on the horror comics genre. **2000 AD** fanzines proliferate, with **Zarjaz**, **Dog Breath** and **Class of '79** at the fore. **Graphic Eye** goes from strength to strength as it single-handedly revives the golden age of fanzines.

Covering comics of the world on the super information highway, the downloadable webzine **Borderline** continues apace, albeit reverting to its freebie status following an apparent poor response to it having a price tag.

Simian Scrolls tells you everything you could possibly want to know about *Planet of the Apes* in comics. **Portal 31** gives intense coverage to Gerry Anderson's classic **TV21**. **Jeff Hawke's Cosmos** is the newly launched tribute title to Sydney Jordan's epic SF newspaper strip.

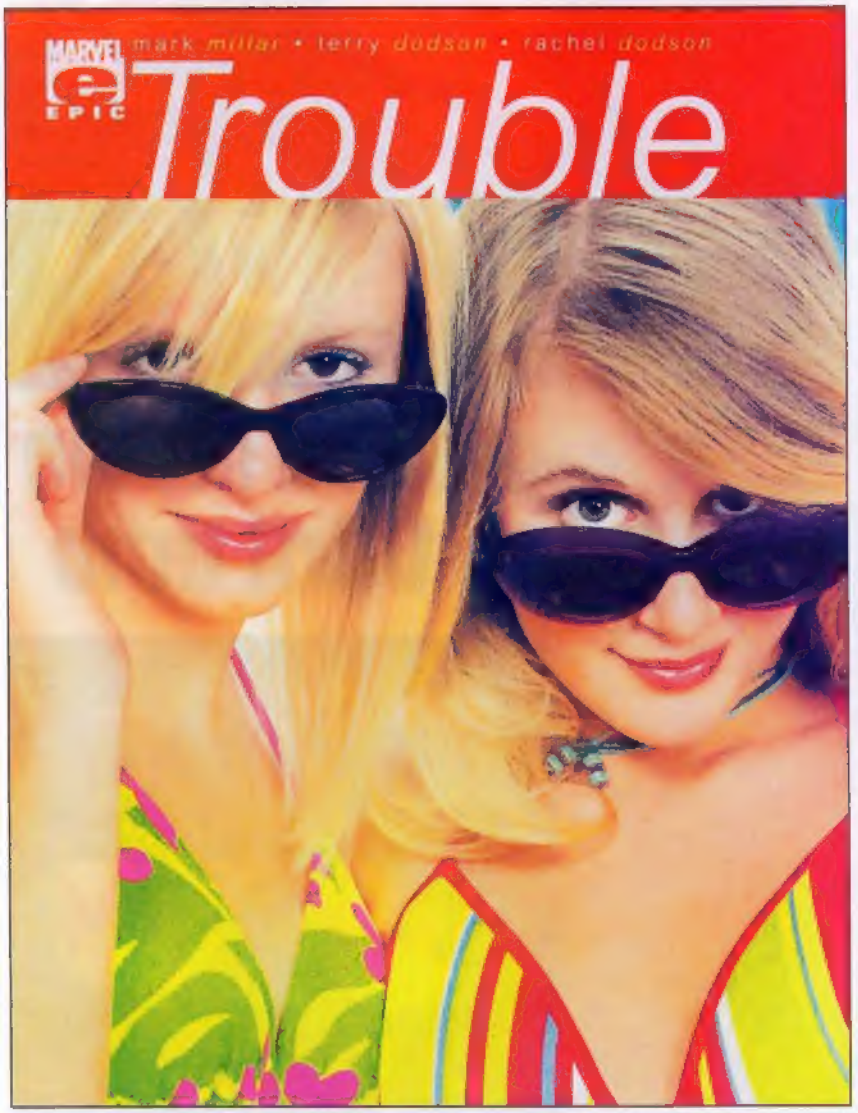
And then there's **Tripwire**. Editor Joel Meadows is to be commended for his tenacity. Following ten years and countless format changes, his comics review title has now taken its biggest leap forward as it is reborn as a 100 page £3.50 full colour glossy monthly. Possibly not a deliberate move, it also offers excellent value for money, with 97 feature pages and only three pages of advertising.

How can he possibly do this? By going for national newsstand distribution off the back of the current spate of comics movies. A brave move indeed. We've tried newsstand three times with **CI**, in an attempt to boost the comics market. But as comics themselves are so sparse in newsagents, the bulk of our content is gobbledygook to casual browsers. Joel's timing is better, and his magazine certainly looks slick, even if its content may confuse more than inform.

But let's support Joel in his ambition. ...And let's just hope the Hollywood romance with four-colour fantasies continues to grow so we all benefit.

***Comics International** editor Dez Skinn's career in the industry spans over 30 years. Titles he has created include **Doctor Who Weekly**, **House of Hammer**, **Hulk Comic**, **Starburst** and **Warrior**. Ex-editorial director of Marvel UK – where his Stan Lee-coined Sez Dez column had a monthly audience of over 500,000 – he has also edited titles including **Buster**, **Conan**, **MAD**, **Star Wars Weekly**, **2000 AD Presents**, **Miracleman** and **Spider-Man** and won over 20 Eagle Awards. A contributor to several lifestyle magazines and consultant on a new Thames TV series, his co-created **V for Vendetta** is under option to Warner Bros.*

Relaunched Marvel imprint opens doors to new talent



***TROUBLE** is the title of the first series from Marvel's resurrected Epic imprint. The five-parter is described as a romance and, hardly epic in appearance, sports holiday-style photo covers.*

Epic Comics resurrected to offer established creators and newcomers alternative to Image and Code 6 lines

MARVEL is bringing back its creator-owned imprint but this time as an arena for all and sundry. Previously the Epic Comics imprint had been an outlet for work by fan favourite writers and artists *[see below]*.

Curiously, the reborn line kicks of with a five-parter by high-profile creators, Mark (**The Ultimates**) Millar and former **Harley Quinn** artists Terry and Rachel Dodson, but their **Trouble** is said not to be representative of the series then to be published under the Epic umbrella.

The new Epic will offer opportunities somewhat akin to Image and CGE's Code 6. While full details of the deal are to be given on May 21 in **Marville #7**, the last issue of the $2.99 title, Bill Jemas – the title's author and Marvel president – has announced that anybody can submit work for consideration by Epic's submissions editor.

Fans want my job

"An old comic creator lament goes something like, 'I don't have fans, just people who want my job'," Jemas added. "Well, people, here is your application. **Marville #7** tells you what you need to know to get started with Epic."

Creators – who will be able to use Marvel characters or submit original material – will be expected to work without Marvel supervision. "Overhead is kept low by having a creative team do all the production work and turn in a ready to print book," explained Jemas. "Although editors will evaluate the initial pitches, they will have a much lessened input."

*Above: Greg Horn's cover art for **Marville #7**, which reveals all about Marvel's new Epic line.*

Jemas – who anticipates Epic comics selling in the 15-20,000 copies range – admits to having no specific limits in mind for the line, feeling it could be as few as 10 or as many as 60 titles.

● Submission guidelines as well as script templates are available to download from www.marvel.com/epic/

From Dreadstar to Offcastes in 12 years

JIM Starlin – the writer/artist who kick started Marvel's graphic novel line with his highly regarded **The Death of Captain Marvel** – also created the publisher's maiden title for its Epic Comics line.

The imprint was a spin-off from the anthology magazine, **Epic Illustrated**, and was spurred on by the increasing attention paid to creator rights by such independent companies as Eclipse and Pacific. Epic's higher profile and Marvel-driven marketing attracted many established fan favourite creators, Starlin being the first.

His **Dreadstar** had begun life in **Epic Illustrated** as *Metamorphosis Odyssey* before moving to Eclipse under the same title. Starlin then renamed it and brought it back to Marvel – initially as the company's third graphic novel.

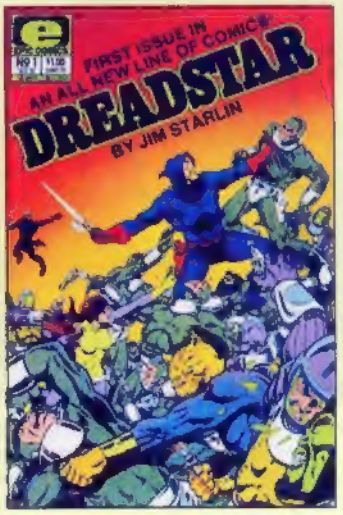
The Epic line was masterminded by editor Archie Goodwin who was next able to tempt Steve Englehart to bring **Coyote** over from Eclipse. New titles such as **Alien Legion**, **Sisterhood of Steel** and **Six from Sirius** followed.

Elektra and Wolverine

Epic also offered an outlet through which time-consuming fully painted work – as exemplified by J M DeMatteis and Jon J Muth's **Moonshadow** – could be made commercially viable. But it was with more mature versions of Marvel heroes that the imprint really took off.

One of Epic's biggest sellers was **Elektra: Assassin**, a six-parter drawn by Bill Sienkiewicz in which Frank Miller returned to writing his **Daredevil** creation. The mini's success was almost matched by **Havok & Wolverine: Meltdown**. Written by Walter and Louise Simonson, this four-parter featured the X-Men heroes as painted by Muth and Kent Williams respectively.

Launched in 1982, the imprint died in 1994 after the failure of a comic-sized four-issue **Epic** anthology and such titles as **Law Dog** and **Offcastes**.



Wolverine in world's strangest team-up

MARVEL'S most popular mutant side-by-side with Doop, the floating blob of protoplasm from **X-Statix** may seem like the stuff of bad fanboy dreams but it is the basic premise of a forthcoming two issue series.

Asked how the mini had come about, editor Axel Alonso told **CI**, "We wanted to do a team-up. A buddy flick. And, as we established back in **X-Force** #120, Doop and Wolverine go back a ways, they have a history, so we decided to go that route.

"Simply put," he added, hopefully with his tongue firmly in his cheek, "**Wolverine/Doop** just might be the most important comics ever, illuminating the human condition in ways never before seen in a comic. And there are lots of fight scenes."

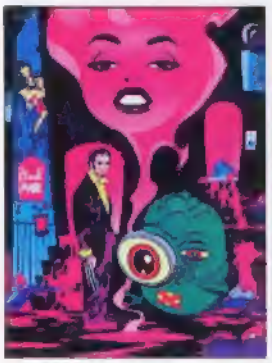
Hot pink femme

The two-parter is written by Pete (**X-Statix**) Milligan, inked by **Mutant, Texas**'s J Bone and pencilled by Darwyn (**Catwoman**) Cooke who told **CI**, "The high concept of putting this unlikely pair together was my idea, but the story is vintage Peter Milligan all the way."

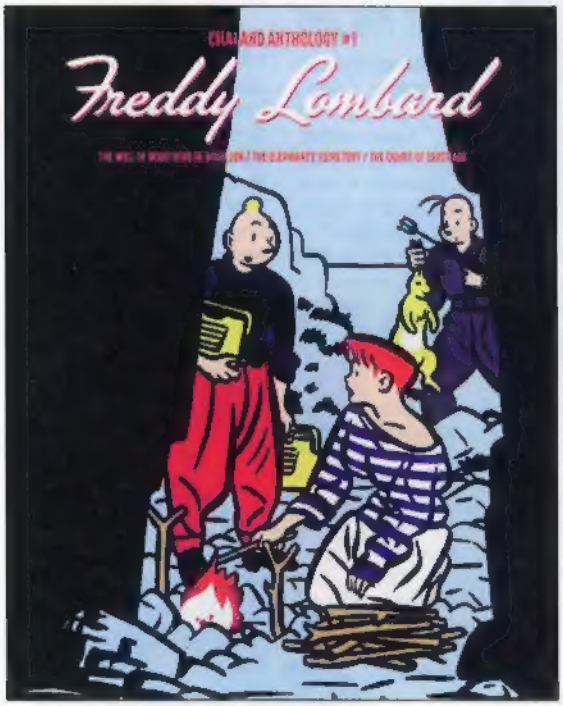
Cooke describes the story as delightfully yet tenderly twisted, in the way that only Milligan can make it. "Kinda like if David Lynch reshot the *Maltese Falcon* with a hot pink femme fatale."

As an artist, Cooke had a very specific idea as to what the feral Canuck should look like. "I'm sure it's just me, but I've thought lately Wolverine has looked a little... well, Freddy Mercury, y'know what I mean? I find it hard to believe the world's coolest, toughest hetero mutant walks around shirtless in a leather biker boy outfit. Zip it up, cowboy!"

The first $2.99 issue of **Wolverine/Doop** ships on May 7 with #2 following a fortnight later.



Above: Darwyn Cooke's cover art for the first issue of Marvel's ***Wolverine/Doop*** *two-parter.*



FREDDY Lombard is making his English-language debut thanks to Humanoids. Created by the late French writer/artist Yves Chaland, the Tin Tin-esque hero and his companions star in three stories in the 136-page ***Chaland Anthology*** *#1 [cover above]. The 9½x12½" hardcover ships in April, priced $24.95.*

T3 brings back movie cyborg for third time

THE TERMINATOR is set to return to comics after an absence of seven years.

This time – after being published by three well-established comics companies – the killer cyborg played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 1984 and 1991 movies is being used to bolster a line that only came into existence in 2002 with a single title. The antihuman robot's license has been picked up by the publisher of such branded hobby magazines as **Beckett Baseball Card Monthly**, **Beckett Sports Collectibles Vintage**, **Beckett Yo-Gi-Oh! Collector** and **Beckett Pokemon and Anime Collector**.

Brink of extinction

The Texas-based company is expanding its comics line with **Terminator 3: Before the Rise**. A prequel to *T3: Rise of the Machines* – the third instalment in the film franchise due to open in the US on July 2 – the prestige format two-parter is set in the future only briefly viewed in the movies, where humans have been hunted to the brink of extinction by SkyNet and its army of Terminators.

Based on a story by Jeff Amano – creator of **Gene Fusion**, Beckett's first comics title – it is written by Ivan Brandon, who scripted the Amano comic. Both 48-page issues are drawn by Goran (**Outlaw Nation**) Parlov and Salgood Sam, also known as Max Douglas.

Above and top: Interior art from the first issue of Beckett's ***Terminator 3: Rise of the Machine*** *by Goran Parlov and Salgood Sam.*

The prequel is followed by **Terminator 3: Eyes of the Rise**. Written by Miles (**Bastard Samurai**) Gunter, it is an adaptation of the new movie as told from the perspective of the T-X, SkyNet's biggest baddest killer robot yet. Art is provided by **Grendel: Red, White, & Black** contributor Mike Hawthorne and former **Avengers** inker Rick Remender.

Terminator 3: Before the Rise *#1, priced $5.95, ships in June.*

Above: A barely recognisable mutant – the star of the latest Marvel Mangaverse *title.* ***X-Men: Phoenix – Legacy of Fire*** *is a three-parter in which Jena and Madelyne Pyre put aside their sibling rivalry in order to retrieve the mysterious Sword of Limbo, a family heirloom stolen by a rival family. Written and drawn by* ***Star Wars Tales*** *contributor Ryan Kinnaird – who combines line art and 3D CGI backgrounds, the $2.99 series premieres on May 14.*

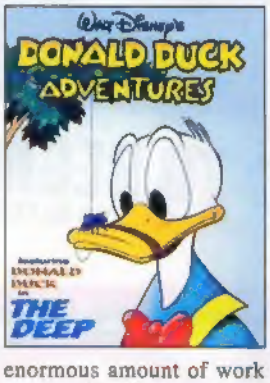
Disney goes manga

THE ever-increasing popularity of the digest format *tankoubon* in US bookstores has prompted Gemstone to complement its forthcoming line of Disney comics with a range of these manga-format (5½x7½") trade paperbacks.

Launching in July as a bimonthly series, the 128-page full colour collections will not be available outside North America – other than by order through Diamond Comics Distributors. Priced $7.95 and intended primarily for sales through bookshops, the *Take-Along* books – as they have been dubbed by the publisher – are to increase frequency to one per month from next year.

Euro Disney

Rather than reprinting classic Carl Barks Duck stories, or even work by such contemporary fan favourites as Don Rosa, the pocket-sized compilations are to feature European strips. Under the terms of its licence, Gemstone has access to the enormous amount of work produced by Egmont for its various Disney titles, which are highly successful throughout Europe.



Gemstone's first volume, **Donald Duck Adventures** *[cover above]*, features the 48-page *The Deep*, as well as *Panicking Pachyderm*, a 37-pager with Mickey Mouse, and the 39-page *End of Days*, which stars Uncle Scrooge.

● Gemstone is to issue the Disney material created by Carl Barks, Don Rosa, and William Van Horn – another fan favourite – in larger, more expensive formats aimed at the collector market.

Grendel creator takes look at DC's Big Three

WRITER/artist Matt Wagner is to examine the affinity between Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman in a miniseries that reveals the untold story of the Amazon Princesses's first encounters with DC's two iconic superheroes.

The **Grendel** creator's prestige format **Trinity** runs to three 64-page issues and takes place early in the careers of all three crime fighters. "This is set in continuity. It's not Diana's first excursion to man's world, but it is early on and she's not used to interacting with men as of yet. She keeps trying to figure them out and then she's presented with these two extreme examples of the male of the species. Needless to say, that doesn't necessarily make it any easier for her."

Holy triumvirate

"Obviously from the title," he continued, "what I'm really examining/presenting is what makes these three characters the major icons in the DCU. What it is that links them together so strongly because, really, this is the holy triumvirate of superhero archetypes; the god of the light, the god of darkness and the goddess.

"When I really started to look at how the characters interacted and interwove, I realised that there were so many instances and attributes that linked two of them and excluded the remaining one," Wagner added. "It's like this: two are men and one is not, two are superhuman and one is not, two are orphans and one is not, two are Earthlings and one is not, two are aristocrats and one is not, two are immigrants and one is not, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera... I found that this list can just go on and on."

Above: Matt Wagner's cover art for the first issue of his ***Batman/Superman/Wonder Woman: Trinity*** *three-parter.*

Batman/Superman/Wonder Woman: Trinity #1*, priced $6.95, ships on June 18.*

Dark Horse gets Goon going

IT MAY be one of the titles in Dark Horse Comics' horror line but creator Eric Powell insists **The Goon** is a comedy.

Asked by **CI** for the high concept Hollywood pitch the writer/artist responded, "I hate when people ask me this question. **The Goon** is something you just have to read to get. Describing it in a couple of sentences is like telling a joke and leaving out the punch-line.

"Anyway," he continued, making a compromise, "**The Goon** is a dark comedy about a gangster fighting a rival gang of zombies."

Powell said that, as a kid, his protagonist lived with his aunt in a travelling carnival group. "She was shot and killed. When the only family he ever knew and loved died, he turned to a life of crime... did I mention it was a comedy?"

He originally published **The Goon** through his own Albatross Exploding Funny Books. The four black and white issues of that series are being represented in colour by Dark Horse in **Nothin' but Misery**, a 136-page trade paperback, which also contains Powell's 2002 **Goon Color Special**.

The Goon is being relaunched by Dark Horse as a bimonthly colour comic.

Pictured: Eric Powell's cover art for ***The Goon*** *trade paperback Volume 1:* ***Nothin' but Misery*** *(above) and the first Dark Horse issue of* ***The Goon*** *(right).*

The Goon #1*, priced $2.99, ships on June 18.* ***The Goon*** *trade paperback Volume 1:* ***Nothin' but Misery****, priced $16.95, ships on July 23.*

Incredible Hulk movie sparks June bonanza

Pictured: *Cover art for the first issue of the* **Hulk: Nightamerica** *six-parter [above] by Brian Ashmore and the 25 cent* **Incredible Hulk** *#55 (below, right) by Leandro Fernandez.*

MARVEL is banking on Ang Lee and Eric Bana – the director and star of *The Hulk* movie – to emulate the box office success Sam Raimi and Tobey Maguire had with *Spider-Man*.

With the feature due to premiere in the US on June 20 [July 18 in the UK], the publisher has lined up a slew of new titles to catch the movie fans' eyes.

Incredible Hulk writer Bruce Jones gets the ball rolling with the $3.50 **Hulk: The Movie Adaptation**. Drawn by **Ultimate Spider-Man**'s Mark Bagley, the 48-page special ships on June 4, with a Dynamic Forces version, signed by Jones, following at $29.99.

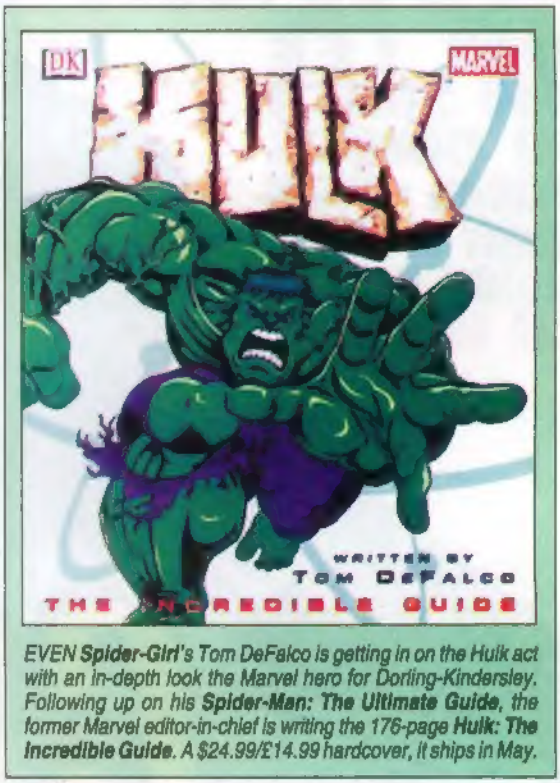
The story is also available in the 128-page misleadingly-titled **Hulk: The Movie** trade paperback. A $12.99 compilation, it guarantees to confuse new readers as it also contains **Incredible Hulk** #34, **The Ultimates** #5 and a 22-page edited version of **Ultimate Marvel Team-Up** #2-3 as well.

Hulk for 25 cents

Also shipping on June 4 is the **Marvel Encyclopedia volume 3: The Hulk**. This 208-page hardcover – which retails at $19.99 – covers all aspects of the Green Goliath's history in comics and on TV as well as including material on the new movie.

A week later **Incredible Hulk** #55 becomes the latest of Marvel's promotional 25 cent comics. Planned as a jumping on point for new readers, the issue kicks off a new five-part storyline in which Jones reintroduces the Absorbing Man. *Hide in Plain Sight* is illustrated by Argentinian artist Leandro Fernandez, whose first US comics work was on #8-12 of Oni's **Queen & Country**.

The second episode of the serial – priced at the regular $2.25 – follows on June 25.



EVEN **Spider-Girl**'s *Tom DeFalco is getting in on the Hulk act with an in-depth look the Marvel hero for Dorling-Kindersley. Following up on his* **Spider-Man: The Ultimate Guide**, *the former Marvel editor-in-chief is writing the 176-page* **Hulk: The Incredible Guide**. *A $24.99/£14.99 hardcover, it ships in May.*

Painted fugitives

While tending to concentrate on the more mainstream bookstore-friendly items, Marvel has not entirely neglected its core business.

As well as its promotional plans for its **Incredible Hulk** title, it is also timing the launch of a mini-series to tie-in with the movie's release.

Premiering on June 25 is **Hulk: Nightmerica**. A six-parter, it is painted by **Batman: Absolution**'s Brian Ashmore and written by role playing games designer Robin Laws, who recently replaced Mike Grell on **Iron Man**.

Bizarre project

Editor Ralph Macchio told **CI** it deals with the Hulk – or rather Bruce Banner – getting connected with a woman who is an escapee from a very bizarre government project. "She's looking to get back into it. She hooks up with Banner kinda accidentally but then it turns out that it wasn't quite as accidental as he first thinks."

Macchio said that during the $2.99 series the woman and Banner – and the Hulk – are drawn into a series of adventures before they are forced to put to rest the threat that is Nightmerica.

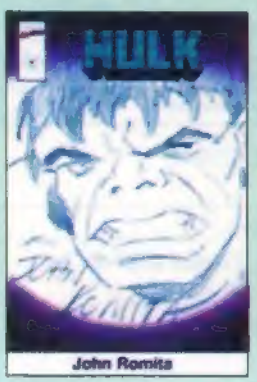
Hulk lands at Topps

ONE OF the major players during the 1990s boom in comic-related trading cards is getting back in the game.

Topps has acquired the licence to produce a 72-card ***Incredible Hulk*** set which it is rush-releasing in order to take advantage of the forthcoming movie.

The cards spotlight art from 40 years of Marvel comics. They ship in boxes of 24 seven-card packs, which retail at $2.

The chase cards include *Gamma Ray Foil* cards, *Crystal Clear* cards and original sketches by John Romita, Marie Severin, Don Perlin and John Czop.



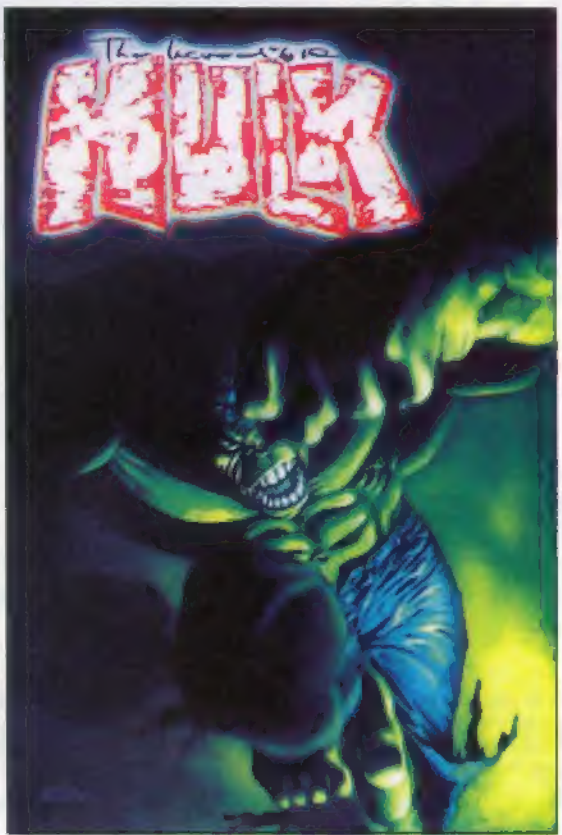
Upper Deck

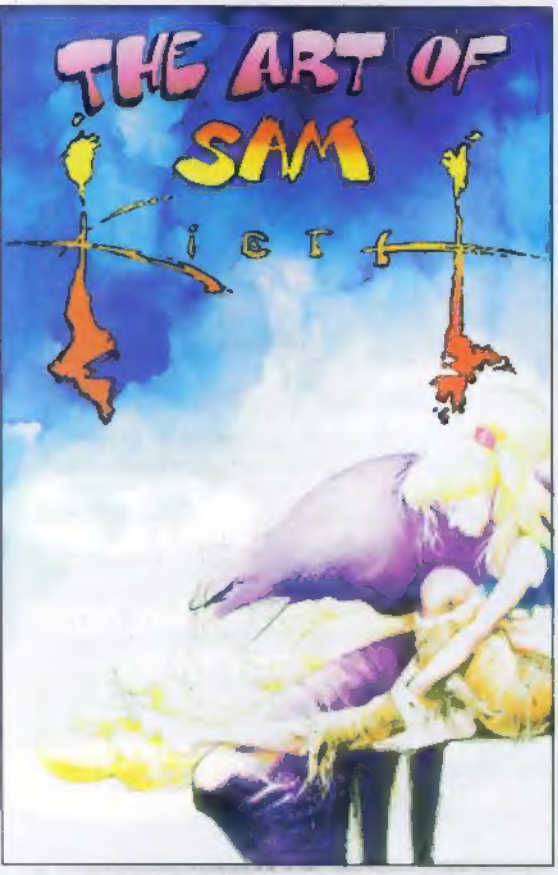
Topps' ***Hulk*** set ships in May while Upper Deck's ***Hulk Film and Comic Cards*** follow in June.

Unlike the Topps series, this 81-card set comprises of film images as well as comicbook art.

The bonus cards for the Upper Deck set are 41 gold foil-embossed **Incredible Hulk** covers, 10 cards with John Romita Jr's interpretation of scenes from the movie and – somehow – four Jack Kirby cut signature cards.

Shipping in $1.99 five-card packs, 24 packs per box, the cards offer a chance to win a high grade copy of **Incredible Hulk** #1 [1962] or **Incredible Hulk** #181 [1974].





THE ART of Sam Kieth [cover above] *is a 352-page softcover spotlighting the* ***Zero Girl*** *creator's work. The 9x12" volume covers all aspects of Kieth's career and includes interviews with a variety of his collaborators as well as previously unpublished art including sketchbook material. It ships from IDW in July, priced $50.*

All change for Birds of Prey

GAIL Simone is making her DC debut as the first female author of the adventures of Oracle and Black Canary.

The former **Agent X** writer takes over **Birds of Prey** with #56. This issue also marks the debut of the ex-**Supergirl** art team of Ed Benes and Alex Lei.

"Historically, I've done a lot of writing about characters that aren't exactly... Oh, what's that word again... Oh yes, smart," Simone told **CI** when asked her reasons for accepting the assignment.

She continued, "This was a chance to write about two clever, intelligent women, who do their thing without heat vision or super-strength. Plus, real friendship is fairly rare in mainstream comics, especially between female characters, so that's fun to portray."

● DC is releasing a **Birds of Prey Secret Files**. A 48-page one-shot, it includes three stories as well as offering background data on the series' main players.

Birds of Prey *#56, priced $2.50, ships on June 18.* ***Birds of Prey Secret Files 2003****, priced $4.95, ships on June 25.*

Above: Ed Benes & Alex Lei's cover art for ***Birds of Prey*** *#56.*

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Matrix online tour

Here are a few of the contributors to the online Matrix website.

Above is a pin-up by **Concrete**'s Paul Chadwick, who also contributes a 20-page b&w strip with possibly his best work to date.

The gorgeous manga-esque art of Keron Grant, the splash page from his 18-page story.

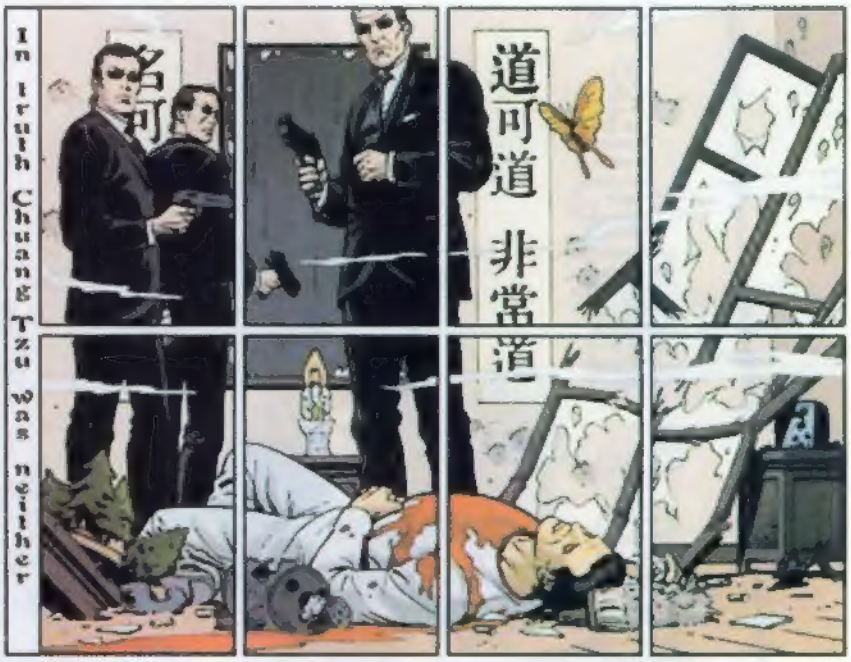
A chilling 17-page strip *Morning Sickness* is the beautiful end-product of the combined talents of John Gaeta, Grant Niesner, Brett Hartshorn, Thomas Proctor, Dan Rosen, Noah Mizrahi, Sean White and Jamie Pilgrim. A combined force to be reckoned with!

Just when you thought it was getting too serious, enter Peter Bagge, providing a perfect contrast through his 6-page contribution, ending with agents leaving the cinema remarking, "The fewer humanoids who comprehend what's really going on, the fewer we must destroy!"

The comics agents of Matrix

"How do we know the Matrix isn't real? The film could be an attempt by the agents to stop us searching for the truth by openly showing us it and labelling it Fiction." – Sleep 2 Dream, Warner Bros forum

Special Matrix feature by
DEZ SKINN



LAST YEAR, **CI** ran an exhaustive survey of its readers only to discover that under 50% have Internet facilities.

Of those online, the average time spent on the Net averaged only one hour a week on reference, feature and news sites. So it's safe to assume that the bulk of you are missing out. Not only on the multiple advantages of accessing the world wide web, but also on a ton of fantastic Maxtrix comics.

Arguments continue to rage over the roots of Larry and Andy Wachowski's vision, whether these self-confessed comics fans (who at one time had *V for Vendetta* scheduled to follow the original Matrix movie) did indeed allow Grant Morrison's **The Invisibles** to influence them.

But there can be no argument about the way the comics industry has taken the Matrix philosophy to its heart and embraced it online in both words and pictures.

The list of contributors to the Warner Bros *What is the Matrix?* site reads like an industry who's who.

Two series of work have been posted to date, the first predating the original movie. They feature the work of over 20 top creators as well as several more than capable new names.

Gaiman's Matrix

In addition to those pictured, Ted McKeever, Tim Sale, David Lapham and John Van Fleet all produce strips, while Neil Gaiman writes a 4,000 word short story. Ever-growing, more is promised, including a new Simon Bisley strip.

For the full story, visit: whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com/cmp/comic_index.html

Above: The ever-inspired Bill Sienciewicz contributes two stunningly beautiful Matrix stories, the 12-page Broadcast Death *and the 7-page* Sweating the Small Stuff *("When it comes to reality, you take what you can get"). Top: the climax from Dave Gibbons' 20-page strip* Butterfly, *an interspersed story of violence and calm with agents fighting it out as a martial arts student meditates in a nearby school.*

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ALTER Egos: Power Stars of Entertainment *is a virtual 3-D exhibition which displays paintings by 17 fine artists commissioned by* ***Entertainment Weekly*** *to turn superstars into superheroes. Among those on view at www.nyccomicbookmuseum.org/AlterEgos.htm are Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne as Batman and Robin* [above, by John Kascht], *Tom Hanks as Captain America* [below left, Mark Stutzman] *and Bono as the Banshee* [below right, Christopher Niemann]. *A joint initiative by the New York City Comic Book Museum and* ***EW****,* **Alter Egos** *is presented by the NYCCBM with images that first appeared in the October 18, 2002* Power Issue *of* ***Entertainment Weekly****.*

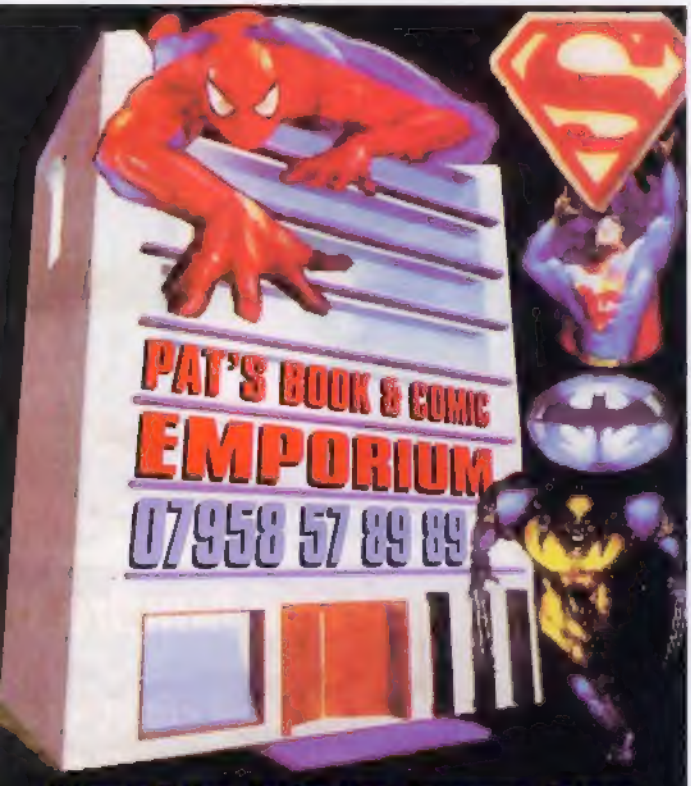
Mainstream publisher aborts graphic novel line

BARELY six months after its launch and with only two titles published, Doubleday Graphic Novels has folded.

Bill Thomas, editor-in-chief of Doubleday Broadway Books, said the company was closing down the line because "the level of sales did not meet our expectations".

While explaining that DGN was "conceived as an experiment to see how well these books performed when published with traditional trade marketing strategies," he added that a "programmatic approach to graphic novel publishing" was best left to publishers who specialise in the format.

Will Eisner's forthcoming **Fagin the Jew** is now to be published as part of the Doubleday general adult list while another graphic novel, an adaptation of Kate Christensen's novel **In the Drink** by Emily Ryan Lerner has been cancelled.



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Spirit creator's first: disinterred

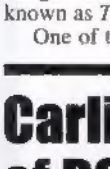
DARK Horse is to reprint the first professional comicbook work of Willis B Rensie, who would later become much better known by his real name, Will Eisner.

As a 20-year-old in 1936, the future creator of *The Spirit* wrote and drew a pirate adventure series set in the 18th Century Caribbean. Produced initially only for overseas consumption, *Hawks of the Sea* appeared in the four issues of Heinle Publishing's short-lived **WOW What a Magazine!** where it was known as *The Flame*.

One of the earliest strips to come out of the Eisner-Iger Studio, it made its US debut in the 1937 second issue of Harry 'A' Chesler's **Feature Funnies** as *The Hawk*, reverting to *Hawks of the Sea* from #3-12 [1938].

The series then moved into Fiction House's **Jumbo Comics** where it remained for over 150 issues but it is the earlier Eisner material that Dark Horse is reprinting in its 128-page **Hawks of the Sea** hardcover. A reissue of the black and white volume released by Kitchen Sink in 1986, the 7x10" book ships on July 23, priced $19.95.

Carlin leaves control of DC Universe to DiDio



AS PART of a restructuring of DC Universe editorial, Mike Carlin *[left]* is stepping down from his position as vice president and executive editor of the DCU to return to hands-on editing.

He moves into the newly-created position of senior group editor of the DC Universe where he is to work on existing titles including **JLA** as well as Jeff Smith's forthcoming **Shazam!** and other projects currently in development.

Dan DiDio, who has been with the company just over a year, is to take over Carlin's present duties. DC's VP of editorial, DiDio is assuming responsibility for the overall direction of the DCU.

His initial efforts will be focused on pushing DC's heroes to the fore, both commercially and creatively.

More Moore on way

Pictured: The covers to ***Alan Moore's Writing for Comics*** *(above); art by Juan Jose Ryp and to* ***The Extraordinary Works of Alan Moore*** *(top right); art by Dave McKean.*

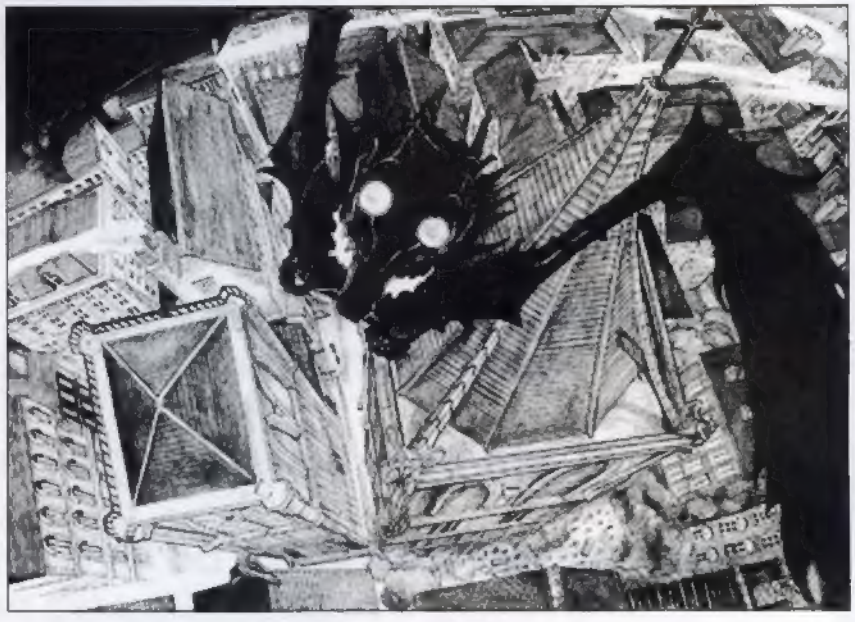
EARLY in his career, **Watchmen** co-creator Alan Moore wrote a series of articles for **Fantasy Advertiser**.

Intended to run across four issues of the British fanzine, only the first three parts of the acclaimed author's *Writing for Comics* were published [in #92-94] but Avatar Press is to make the entire work available.

Illustrated in black and white by Juan Jose Ryp and Jacen Burrows, the 48-page **Alan Moore's Writing for Comics** features a new essay in which the author discusses how his thoughts on writing have changed in the two decades since he wrote the original article. The $5.95 softcover ships in June.

It is followed in July by **The Extraordinary Works of Alan Moore**, in which the he talks about his life and work in an extensive series of interviews.

Priced $24.95, the 208-page TwoMorrows softcover features rare strips, scripts, artwork and photographs as well as contributions from the writer's closest collaborators.



Legendary Victorian revealed to be alien

WHITECHAPEL Freak creator Dave Hitchcock is following his Jack the Ripper saga with what he described to **CI** as another Victorian-esque outing, but one with a small sci-fi element to it.

Springheeled Jack is a black and white three-parter to be published through the writer/artist's Black Boar Press. Launching the series at Comics 2003 in Bristol at the end of May, Hitchcock said it is based on the little known 'legend' of a mysterious figure who frightened women, and then leapt off leaving the terrified victims mainly unscathed.

"'It had eyes of flaming coals' was a statement from more than one victim," Hitchcock stated. "Police didn't do anything as they had no substantial evidence. After all the victims were alive and relatively unharmed."

Victorian X Files

Hitchcock's protagonist is Jack Rackham, who has seen the creature with his own eyes – it took his wife from in front of him. "Obsessed with finding her, he has searched everywhere to no avail, taking it upon himself to find her or at least bring the 'dark figure' to justice."

It is Rackham's belief that the creature could be 'otherworldly in origin,' making his appearance, as Hitchcock put it, a first encounter. "A new kind of justice is needed in 1860 London. The comic will be a kind of 'Victorian *X Files*', taking elements of fairy tales and penny-dreadful stories and weaving a dose of history in there, too."

Hitchcock says that Dr Jekyll also appears and a dying Prince Albert, "In the comic, an alien sprouts out of him. But the media was told he died of typhoid fever."

Thundercats vs dogs

Above: Brett Booth pencils for DC/WildStorm's **Thundercats: Dogs of War** five-parter.

FORMER **Authority** editor John Layman is returning to WildStorm to write the third chapter in the DC imprint's **ThunderCats** revival

Drawn by **Backlash**'s Brett Booth, the five issue **Dogs of War** is set a decade after events chronicled in **ThunderCats: The Return** Third Earth has become a Utopia. Lion-O – prematurely aged by his time in the *Book of Omens* – is now Elder King of Thundera.

But then his realm is invaded by the Dogs of War A savage, heavily armed race of canine killers, they will stop at nothing to subjugate the entire galaxy. And Lion-O must ask Mumm-Ra, the ThunderCats' sworn enemy, for his help in stopping this intergalactic scourge.

● The first issue features alternate covers - by Brett Booth and Jason Pearson.

***ThunderCats: Dogs of War #1** priced $2 95, ships on June 25*

New president for Archie

ALLAN Grafman has been installed as the new president of Archie Comics Entertainment

Taking on his new role, the veteran media executive stressed that while several Archie characters – including Sabrina the Teenage Witch and Josie and the Pussycats – have been developed for film and television, the underlying rights remain with Archie Comics and there are many categories that remain undeveloped.

He said the company is looking at all areas of media for opportunities, aiming to "follow the model of such companies as Disney, Nickelodeon and Saban."

Spawn detectives get second Image title

ALTHOUGH its three-title line is beset with late shipping problems, Todd McFarlane Productions is introducing another monthly comicbook.

A companion series to the **Spawn** spin-off, **Sam and Twitch**, **Casefiles** immerses the two New York City police detectives in an even murkier urban jungle than that seen in their existing title. Written by **Black Sun**'s Marc Andreyko, the comic consists of a series of serials, each illustrated by a different art team.

Above: Scott Morse art from **Casefiles: Sam and Twitch #1**

The first – a six-parter titled *Have You Seen Me?* – is being rendered by **Elektra: Glimpse & Echo** writer/artist Scott Morse. It is made up of three individual stories occurring simultaneously These, editor Brad Gould told **CI**, are to be told horizontally across the pages of all six issues. "The top and bottom storylines will be pencilled and inked, and the middle one painted."

***Casefiles: Sam & Twitch #1**, priced $2 50, ships on May 14*

*JEPH Loeb and Jim Lee are to stick around beyond their planned year-long run on **Batman**. They are extending their hugely successful stint by a further six issues. Originally intending only to produce their 12-issue Hush storyline – which concludes in September's #619 – the writer/artist team and inker Scott Williams will now stay on the title to #625. Shown above is Lee's pencils for the cover art to **Batman** #612 These are being reproduced uninked and uncoloured as the cover to the second printing of that $2 25 issue, in which the Dark Knight tackles the Man of Steel. The new edition is available now.*

CI #156 competition winners

IN **CI** #156 we sponsored readers with two competitions The first, celebrating Dynamic Forces' tenth anniversary offered no less than 50 readers over $8500 worth of DF signed comics. The winners of creator-autographed **Batman #608 Dark Knight Strikes Again #1 Spider-Man Movie Adaptation** and **Wolverine #181** are

Mr G Arthur, Livingston
Peter Barnett, Hazlemere
Pete Bayliss, Herne Hempstead
Zak Boutell, Reading
Grayson Bowler, Walthamstow
John Boydell, Southport
Stuart Brierley, Abbeymead
Richard Briscoe, Cottingley, Yorks
Colin Brown, Tranent, East Lothian
Ewan Brownlow, Stevenage
Steven Chan Colchester
Andy Cowden Llandudno
Rob Cox, Bishops Stortford
Jean Coyne, Leeds
P Davidson, Glasgow
Owen Davies, Abergavenny
Karl Dennis, Leicester
Shaun Dixon Berwick-on-Tweed
Marcus Dryden, Farnborough
Lee Field, Slough, Berkshire
Robert Foster, Battersea, London
Mark Greener, Bluntisham, Cambs
Sam Greer, Enfield, Middlesex
John Gregory Sheffield, Yorkshire
Zaffir Hakim, Partick, Glasgow
A S Harrat, Walsall W Midlands
Paul Hayes, Worthing Sussex
T Harrison Aylesbury, Bucks
Norman Herrington, Midhurst
Richard Jameson, Barnet, Herts
Steven Jenkins, Isle of Wight
Graham MacKenna Cromarty
Jim MacRae, Dundee
Gary McLean, Bushey, Herts
Ian Mitsted, Norwich
Andrew Morton, Bromley, Kent
Lee Neal, Gt Barr, Birmingham
Stephen Price, Fairwater, Cardiff
Faiz Rehman Ashvale, Surrey
Andrew Richardson, Poole
Scott Rochold, Southampton
Paul Robinson, Thornton Heath
Iain Scott-Drummond, Poole
Colin Spiers West Bromwich
Mark Taylor, London SE21
AR Thompson, Didcot
James Tomlinson, Congleton
Ian Topping, St Helens
Adrian Walsh, Ipswich
Simon Wright, York

Incredible Hulk competition winner

IN **CI** #156, one reader had the chance to win a copy of Incredible Hulk #1 (1962) Of 897 entries the winner was Ian Donaghue of Newport, IoW

All the **CI** #156 prizes should be with winners by the end of April

Favourite features voting scored the 10 most popular sections of CI#156 as:

1 News International (19 2%)
2 Reviews (12 1%)
3 Movers & Shakers (9 8%)
4 Hulk movie feature (9 7%)
5 Advance Listings (5 7%)
6 Q&A (5.2%)
7 Sez Dez (4.2%)
8 Networks (3.9%)
9 Frame to Frame (3.8%)
10 Letters/Comic Cuts (3 7%)

While 22% of our readers didn't have a least favourite, the section which fared worst was Novel Graphics on Rich Corben, with 11% of the votes.

In Brief

WITH less than a year to go until he concludes his record breaking 300- issue **Cerebus** series, Dave Sim is bumping the page count of issue #290 from 24 pages to 48

But double the page count means the June-shipping black and white comic – solicited at $2 25 - is to retail at $4.50. It contains part 25 of *Latter Days*, a 35-parter on which the writer/artist is joined as usual, by Gerhard as inker and background artist

MOONSTONE has added yet another 1940s radio hero to its *Moonstone Noir* roster

Joining Johnny Dollar, the original Mysterious Traveler and Mr Moto is a private eye portrayed by Jack (*Dragnet*) Webb in 1946 and again in 1949 Currently unscheduled, **Pat Novak for Hire** is by Steven (**X-Man**) Grant and **Prime** artist John Statema

TAKING its title from the 1950s Charlton anthology to which the Spider-Man co-creator was a key contributor, **Steve Ditko: The Mysterious Traveler** is a 220-page examination of the artist's 50 years in comics.

Subtitled **A Critical Retrospective of His Career and Work**, the 9x12" hardcover is edited by Blake Bell It ships from Fantagraphics Books in June, priced $39 95

DC IS switching off **The Power Company** The series written by Kurt Busiek and pencilled by Tom Grummett ends with the $2 75 #18 which ships in July

POWERS writer Brian Michael Bendis and **Ascension** artist David Finch are to replace Mark Millar and Adam Kubert on **Ultimate X-Men**

They begin their six-issue run on the $2 25 Marvel title with #34 which ships in May

"Don't want to give away too much," said Bendis, who also writes **Ultimate Spider-Man**. "But it is a Wolverine quest story starring all the active members of the X-Men Plus it opens up the Ultimate Universe, showing how Spider-Man and the X-Men interact, or don't, in our little Ultimate world. Lots of guest stars and surprises."

DC IS to celebrate **Elfquest**'s 25th Anniversary and its acquisition of the property with a 40-pager reprinting the 1978 first issue of Wendy and Richard Pini's fantasy saga

The $2 95 **Elfquest: 25th Anniversary Edition** ships on July 2 It is also to include an interview with the Pinis as well as a preview of the four-issue **The Searcher and the Sword** The first addition to the **Elfquest** canon for some years, the mini is lined up to premiere before Christmas

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Witchblade to star in animation-style comic

TOP COW is to launch a line of animation-style comics and action figures despite there being no TV cartoon series to spin off from.

The vanguard for this puzzling strategy is a **Witchblade Animated** title, which is to be premiered at Wizard World Chicago on August 8. The comic is written by *Batman: The Animated Series* producer Paul Dini, who includes **JLA: Secret Origins** and **Zatanna: Everyday Magic** among his comicbook credits.

Witchblade Animated is being drawn studio style with Disney's *Kim Possible* storyboard artist David Bullock providing layouts for penciller Darwyn (**Catwoman**) Cooke and **Mutant, Texas** inker J Bone.

Palisades Toys – the Image imprint's partner in the initiative – is to launch its tie-in line of action figures simultaneously with **Witchblade Animated** #1.

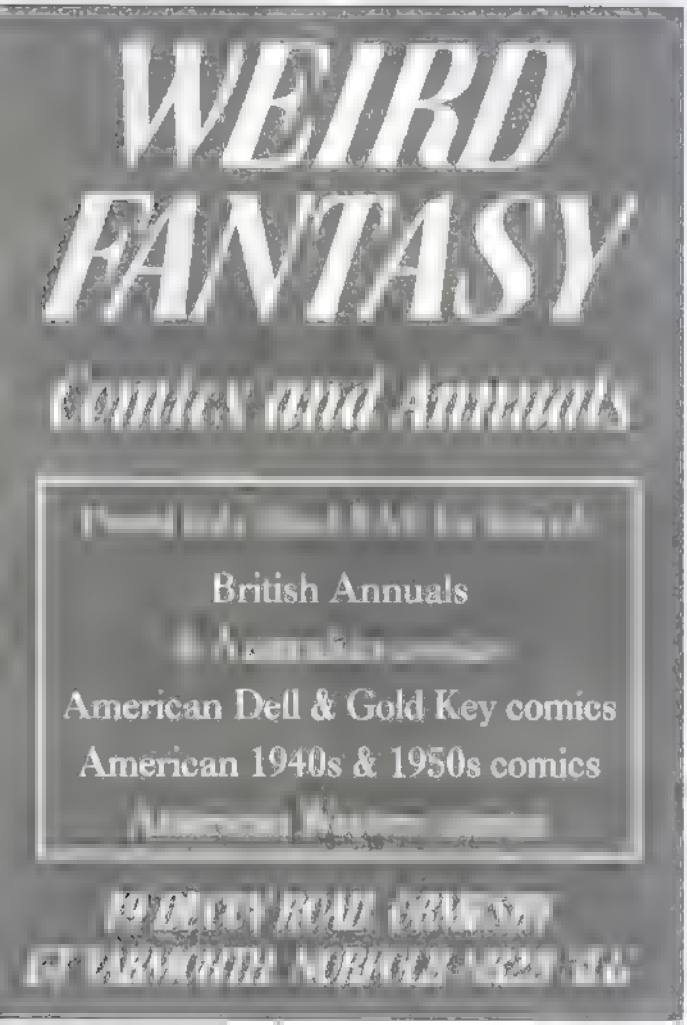
The initial line consists of four figures: Sara Pezzini in civilian garb, The Darkness, Magdalena with hood, cape, and sword and Sara Pezzini in overcoat. Standing 4½" tall with multiple articulation, they ship blister carded, priced $10 each.

Spectacular resurrection

MARVEL is killing off **Peter Parker, Spider-Man**. The $2.25 title – which concludes on June 25 with #57 – is being replaced by **Spectacular Spider-Man**.

The new comic resurrects the name of Marvel's short-lived first magazine venture *[see cover of 1968 first issue right]*. Subsequently used as the title of the first spin-off series from **Amazing Spider-Man**, it ran 263 issues from 1976 to 1998.

Marvel's reborn **Spectacular Spider-Man** launches in August. It is produced by an earlier **Peter Parker, Spider-Man** writer Paul (**Origin**) Jenkins and **Out There** artist Humberto Ramos, who had worked with Jenkins on a number of his **Peter Parker** issues.



Dupuy-Berberian: A double-barrelled partnership

Novel Graphics by Paul Gravett

Highlighting the latest and best in graphic novels

IN A VARIATION on Samuel Johnson's oft-quoted non-PC comment about London, I propose: "When a man is tired of comics, he is tired of life."

The main reasons why most people give up reading comics are because they grow out of them and/or grow bored with them. I've seen it happen to friends of mine, when they plug that final gap in a superhero run or wind up buying the latest issues only to double-bag them without even opening them.

As the years go by, it's also not always that easy explaining your expensive hobby to parents or partners. Ask Nicholas Cage, or anyone whose mum got rid of their prized collection.

In that respect, I've been lucky. Back in the mid-70s, when the Marvel and DC duopoly of American comics – and my interest in them – were at one of their lowest ebbs, along came **2000 AD**, **Heavy Metal** and the birth of independent U.S. comics to offer me fresh ideas and visions. Comics I could continue to grow up with and it's never stopped. These days, there's so much more choice out there I believe that if you keep your eyes and mind open you'll find the comics to speak to you your whole life through.

Sometimes creators face these crises of faith too. After closely collaborating for a decade, two Parisian *bande dessinée auteurs* Philippe Dupuy and Charles Berberian (*www.dupuy-berberian.com*) were also asking themselves why they carried on producing their albums. Now that they were 30-something, husbands and fathers, they wondered whether the medium, so associated with their childhood and adolescence, could accommodate the themes they wanted to develop next. As adults, wasn't it time to put away such childish things? Wouldn't a film or a novel be more suitable?

To face up to these questions, they each agreed to keep a solo 'secret diary' in comic form, recording their feelings and experiences while crafting the third of their colour **Monsieur Jean** albums. The result is **Journal d'un Album**, one of the most honest and engaging autobiographical graphic novels in the genre and a fascinating behind-the-scenes glimpse into the creative process, out this summer in English from Highwater Books.

Some 120 pages of funny and touching revelations confront how and why, despite all the obstacles, they continue to pour so much effort into making comics. It certainly isn't for the money. Their stylish, attractive illustrations are in high demand (you might have noticed their campaigns for the Nicolas wine shops) and bring in 90% of their income, allowing them to devote 90% of their time to their much poorer-paying B.D. passion.

One answer lies in their partnership of nearly 20 years, surely one of the most unusual in comics. We're used to long-term close collaborations between a writer and an artist in this business, but it's almost unique for two complete writer-artists to contribute both to the story and the art and work together so reciprocally and harmoniously, that they can't tell who did what.

Their freeform working method mystified their readers so much, the *auteurs* made fun of it by exhibiting mock-elaborate miniature mechanisms, for example, showing mannequins of them both operating a single giant pencil.

Some people have mistaken Dupuy-Berberian as one person with a distinguished hyphenated surname; actually since 1984 it's become a sort of third person, a fusion of the two of them, a sum greater than the parts, almost another 'entity'

Since 1989, their principal character has been Monsieur Jean, starting out like them as a big-nosed, big-hearted bachelor boy in his 20s. He becomes a modestly successful novelist, and, as their **Journal** discloses, a combined alter-ego through which a lot of their personal experiences are filtered.

Two of the early Monsieur Jean short stories were translated in **Drawn & Quarterly** volume 2, numbers 4 and 6. In the first, Jean bumps into a former lover, now married and pregnant, with her over-protective hubby in tow. Chance remarks transport Jean back to their relationship and what might have been, like a wistful coda to his years of dating and staying single.

The second opens on Jean's 30th birthday and mixes a promotional shindig to Lisbon with his losing the book of poetry given by his grandfather which first inspired him to write. Kept safe inside it is a letter he wrote when he was still a teenager to his future self, aged 30

The first full-length Monsieur Jean album, all 54 pages, appeared in English in **Drawn & Quarterly** volume 3. The skill with which Dupuy and Berberian interweave the various storylines and recurring metaphors – from a Japanese legend to the tragic fate of a painter – appears effortless

The sheer flexibility of comics allows them to jump from the mundane to the surreal, mirroring the way we all make leaps of thought The story marks a turning point as Jean finally decides to make a commitment and follow his girlfriend Cathy to New York.

The next instalment appears this year in **Drawn & Quarterly** volume 5, as Jean – now a papa – makes a family visit to Paris with their baby. He becomes embroiled in his impossible flatmate's problems who is raising his own son from a previous relationship of his former girlfriend.

It's a far cry from that earlier prolonged post-adolescence, both of Jean and of Dupuy-Berberian. They once admitted, "It seemed important to us to use the character of Monsieur Jean to try to move forward in our own lives. We adapt what we and our friends are living through to find stories for this poor guy, who serves us as an outlet for our day-to-day troubles."

Jean looks set to grow older and grow up in tandem with his co-creators and with his readers. To me, that's the appeal of their comics – they are putting their own lives into them, by living their stories before they tell them to us

*Opposite page: Dupuy and Berberian's self-portraits. Left: Work-in-progress art from the second Monsieur Jean album – **La théorie des gens seuls** – and (above) the cover to the third album, **Les femmes et les enfants d'abord***

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Former Defender becomes latest Marvel obscurity to snare major picture deal

Mike Conroy's Frame to Frame

Charting the latest news between films and comics

JUST as Elton John pays a man to shave his back and Jennifer Lopez allegedly employs someone to tweak her nipples to keep 'em perky, it would seem Marvel Studio boss Avi Arad must have a grunt whose job it is to trawl the archives seeking forgotten heroes.

At least no one could be accused of jumping to that conclusion based on the available evidence. Look who the former ToyBiz exec has been able to get Hollywood interested in to date. Alongside the obvious X-Men, Spider-Man and Hulk stand such minor and/or obscure heroes as Ant-Man, Blade, Deadpool, Deathlok, Morbius the Living Vampire and Power Pack among others. To that list can now be added the Gargoyle, a character so unimportant that he doesn't even warrant a passing mention in **Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics** by Les Daniels, **Marvel Universe** by Peter Sanderson or the just-released **Marvel Encyclopedia**. That the latter book has also erased the team he joined from Marvel history speaks volumes.

It's probably not particularly surprising to learn the centuries-old creature started out as a stone church gargoyle. Brought to life by a Druid priest's magic to wreak vengeance on Christians, his form was eventually possessed by a man who began to use the body for good.

Attack of the Clones

Introduced in **Defenders** #94 [1981] by J M DeMatteis and artists Don Perlin and Joe Sinnott, the Gargoyle went on to star in his own 1985 four parter written by DeMatteis and drawn by Mark Badger.

Apparently it's that mini which is to be the basis of the *Gargoyle* movie Columbia Pictures has moved into development although the film version of the human-soul-trapped-inside-a-gargoyle tale strays quite a way from DeMatteis's comicbook storyline.

Scripted by *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* and *The Scorpion King* writer Jonathan Hales, the movie is to focus more on the story of a little boy who likes to converse with a gargoyle perched on top of his apartment building – a gargoyle that ultimately comes to life and embarks on a desperate mission to return to the human form he once had.

Not for the first time I find myself asking, why bother with the option? It's not as if the Marvel Gargoyle was unique. Just ask Disney. The Mouse House's animated *Gargoyles* series seems to have as much – if not more – in common with what Hales is planning.

Comics fans have no Patience for Catwoman

Meanwhile over on a movie that's been in development so long it's rapidly reaching its sell-by-date, *X2*'s Storm, Halle Berry, has just been cast as another comicbook heroine in *Catwoman*. The *X-Men* star is replacing Ashley Judd on the project.

The film – which already has fans of the DC heroine up in arms – is being directed by the singularly-named Pitoff from a script by John

Above: Frank Frazetta's poster promoting his gallery, which opened on June 9, 2001 in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Left: Isaac Christians, the Defender also known as the Gargoyle, as depicted by Mark Badger circa 1986.

Rogers that has been rewritten by Mike Ferris and John Brancato. And you know what Hollywood wisdom says about the more names there are on the script credits...

Catwoman – which, among other things, supplants the Selina Kyle alter ego with the bland sounding Patience Price – now seems to have nothing beyond its title in common with the one-time Bat-villainess.

For those keeping score, Michelle Pfeiffer played a version – the catalyst for the new movie –somewhat closer to the comicbook incarnation of Kyle's alter ego in director Tim Burton's 1992 feature, *Batman Returns*, while Julie Newmar and Eartha Kitt both took turns camping it up as Catwoman in the 1960s *Batman* TV series.

Superhero reality TV

Oh, how I wish this column could take the credit. No sooner do I mention superhero reality TV (*Frame to Frame*, **CI** #157) than Stan Lee's out there, selling the concept to the WB network.

Who Wants to be a Superhero? is to feature contestants pitching their ideas to a panel of celebrity judges who have played superheroes on the screen. Semi-finalists will undergo a superhero make-over by a professional artist overseen by Lee, as well as competing in various 'heroic' stunts and challenges.

The winner of the contest will be eligible to have his or her superhero idea expanded into a comic book. Lee's team will also look into doing a comicbook movie or TV spin-off.

Painting with Fire

A far more worthy project is *Painting with Fire*, an independently financed documentary about the life and work of legendary fantasy artist Frank Frazetta.

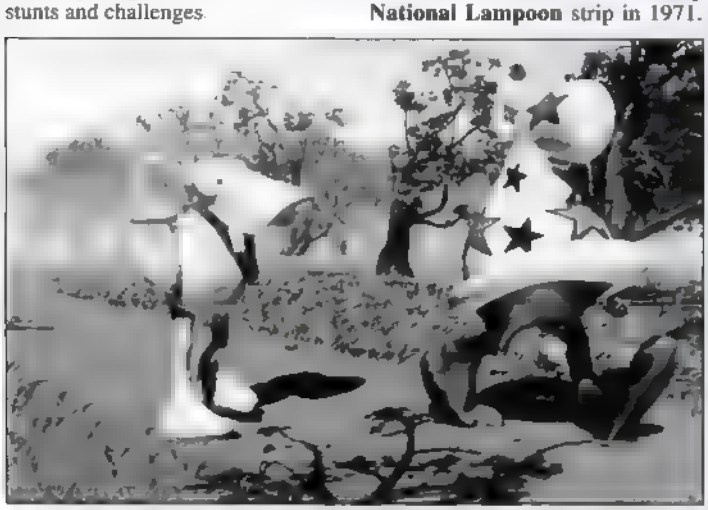
The 96-minute direct-to-video feature premiered in Los Angeles at the Comic Book and Science Fiction Convention on April 6 2003. Directed by Lance Laspina, it covers all aspects of Frazetta's career from his comicbook work to his paintings and includes interviews with the artist and his family.

And finally...

Almost three decades after his creator died, Cheech Wizard is a star of the screen, albeit a computer screen.

But the essence of Vaughn Bodé's character has been elegantly captured by animator Nigel Hendrickson in his computer-generated Internet short on which he was aided by the cartoonist's son, Mark.

Introduced by the underground comix guru in 1967, the sex-mad self-important sorcerer in the big hat became the star of a monthly **National Lampoon** strip in 1971.



Above: A still from Trick, the computer generated Cheech Wizard short available to view or download from http://nigelanimation.com/cheech_proj/index.html

A-Z of comics chewed and spewed by the studios

Hoping to see your favourite comicbook on the silver screen? Take a look below

Amazing Spider-Man pre-production (dir – Sam Raimi) The release date for the sequel has moved from May 7, 2004 to July 2, 2004 – quite a blow in terms of the traditional movie release purple patch. Star Tobey Maguire's extended stay on the movie *Seabiscuit* is said to be a large contributor to the delay, and not the rumoured back problems the actor has been said to have suffered with. More positive news features an matronics expert Steve Johnson, who will be working on Dr Octopus. He has opted to use full animatronic arms for the villain rather than CG effects. "Sam Raimi's a fan of animatronics, and he feels like the fans would prefer to see the real thing," Johnson said. "It's a lot harder when you have a puppet, and you've got 18 performers on the set. It takes a lot longer to shoot than if you do it with digital effects."

Batman in development with Warner Brothers (dir – Christopher Nolan; wr – David Goyer) DC Comics is looking like a sick puppy in the movie theatres. Superman and Batman are not what you might call super-fuelled enterprises at the moment. But all of that might be about to change with the introduction of David Goyer. The *Blade* honcho has signed on to write the script for a new Batman talking picture, unrelated to any of the currently mooted projects, such as *Batman Year One*, *Batman vs Superman* or *Carry on Batman*. All right, I made that last one up. Goyer will wrestle with an idea stemming from Christopher Nolan, who did such fine work on *Memento* and *Insomnia*.

Battle Chasers optioned by 20th Century Fox (wr – Stuart Hazeldine; prod – Alex Young + Ken Levin + Jason Netter) 20th Century Fox has picked up the feature film option on Joe Madureira's Battle Chasers. Stuart Hazeldine, who wrote the TV series *Riverworld*, is hoping to land the script for the movie.

The Crow: Wicked Prayer in development (The Crow – Edward Furlong; dir – Lance Mungia) Edward Furlong has been giving out about his latest role. In this movie, The Crow comes back from the dead. "It's crazy," said Furlong of the story for the movie due to start filming in June. "I think it's going to be the best one," he added. "I come in, I kill the bad guys. I'm the Crow. It's going to be dope!" Yeah, thanks, Ed. Deep, really deep.

The Fall in development with Phantom Four (dir – David Goyer; wr – Ed Brubaker) Comics bad-boy (or Good-boy, or whatever) David Goyer has said that comic scribe Ed Brubaker has finished a rewrite of the script adapting his indie comic book The Fall. Goyer and his producing partner Pascale Faubert have optioned it, and are pleased with the progress.

Garfield casting (Jon Arbuckle – Breckin Meyer; Liz – Jennifer Love Hewitt) This movie is to be a live-action and animated feature, with a realistic look, rather like *Stewart Little*. The movie stars Breckin Meyer as Garfield's owner Jon Arbuckle, and Jennifer Love Hewitt as his prospective girlfriend, Liz.

Hulk post production (dir – Ang Lee; Bruce Banner – Eric Bana) Tim Burton favourite Danny Elfman has been drafted in to create the score for the forthcoming Hulk movie. Previous composer Mychael Danna, "has been dropped" according to reports. Further exciting musical news over the film tells us that UK percussionist group the Dhol Foundation has just completed a recording session on the *Hulk* soundtrack (plus filming a piece for the *Making of* feature on the eventual DVD). A dhol is a drum, dude. They're led by Johnny Kalsi, and check out their cool site at www.dholfoundation.com. Anyways, they recently finished duties on Martin Scorsese's crap *Gangs of New York*. Nothing personal – the soundtrack was ace. I'll have to wait for the director's cut, but I don't know if I can be bothered. Anyway, *Hulk* will surely make up for it.

Midnight Nation early days (dir – Mark Steven Johnson) TV and comics wunderkind J. Michael Straczynski says that *Daredevil* director Johnson has shown interest in making Midnight Nation his next film. Straczynski said, "We're taking meetings over the next few weeks to see if we can make that happen."

Punisher casting (Frank Castle – Thomas Jane; wr/dir – Jonathan Hensleigh, prod – Avi Arad + Gale Anne Hurd) Artisan Pictures and Marvel Studios have officially announced that Thomas Jane will star as Frank Castle in The Punisher. Although no other parts have been cast, cameras are set to roll on the movie in July, with a summer 2004 release planned. Producer and Marvel superhero Avi Arad commented on the casting of Jane: "Although Frank Castle is a tough-as-nails vigilante, he is, at his very core, an extremely tortured soul, a victim of survivor's guilt. Thomas Jane, being a character actor, is going to have all the dimension necessary to bring to life the depth of a character who is both the hero and the victim with the physicality of a superhero. By signing Thomas, we follow the Marvel tradition of bringing art-house actors in to tackle our complex characters. We are very excited to have him as part of our family."

Hurd agrees, adding, "Thomas is one of our finest actors and comes from the indie world as have other actors who've assumed superhero roles so successfully such as Tobey Maguire and Eric Bana. We are thrilled that an actor of this calibre will be our Punisher."

Silver Surfer in development with 20th Century Fox (Silver Surfer – Vin Diesel) Hot property Vin Diesel has been associated with the role of the classic comicbook hero. The actor said that he sees his own multi-ethnic reflection in the Surfer's shiny skin. "The Surfer is an intergalactic superhero," Diesel said. He also views the character as being "one step further than all these regional superheroes." *Silver Surfer* has long been in development with Fox, who picked it up as part of a package deal with *The Fantastic Four*. In a February interview, Marvel chief Avi Arad said the project was in the early stages and had no writer.

Son of the Mask in development with New Line Cinema (starring – Jamie Kennedy; wr – Lance Khazei) Jamie Kennedy will follow in the footsteps of Jim Carrey and become the big green head when he dons The Mask. *Son of the Mask* will not attempt to link to Carrey's Stanley Ipkiss character. Instead, it will focus on a cartoonist who is not ready for fatherhood but finds himself raising a baby endowed with the powers of the mask of Loki.

X-Men 2 in the can (dir – Brian Singer) Bryan Singer has been goading the hardcore fans, coming out with all guns blazing. On a recent TV outing he said he's got a few things in store that'll blow everyone away. "Even with all the Internet talk and all of the things that people know or think they know, there will still be some surprises," Singer said. "I guarantee it." He also claimed that work on the first movie, plus working with an ensemble cast on *The Usual Suspects* had helped him with this new movie. "It's not really an ensemble," Singer said. "There are key characters that have key relationships that are at the centre of our story. It's become my obsession, to see how many characters I can actually play off in a single movie."

compiled by Jim Hannah, freelance hair dresser to Mr Stewart on X-Men III

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Comment is a forum to enable fans and professionals alike to express their personal points of view on aspects of the comics industry. As such, the following opinions do not necessarily reflect those of this publication, but space will be given in subsequent issues to well-reasoned opposing views. Submissions are edited only for grammar, clarity and brevity.

Love in the face of mortal danger

Comment by Andi M. McGregor, East Lothian, Sconny Botland

RAWHIDE Kid: Slap Leather' Brilliant! At last, a comic that is gloriously in your face about the thing fanboys dare not mention.

There's a theory that in a western culture men are only allowed to love other men when faced with mortal danger. That the camaraderie of combat offers the only arena where true feelings can be legitimately expressed in powerful, manly hugs and tearful blubbings of "I love you, buddy!" Highly muscled, athletic bodies performing extraordinary feats of strength, skill and daring-do while wearing dazzling, impossibly skintight costumes... sorry, got a bit Andy McNab for a moment.

Superheroes have always been like that, surreptitiously toying with the confusion caused by all those fizzing teenage hormones. The understandable knee-jerk reaction for those experiencing these bewildering moments of transformation is to vehemently deny such feelings, and express them as an extreme hatred for anything vaguely camp, in order to solidly affirm one's own masculinity and necessarily reassure your buds that you're definitely not "one of them"

But there's still that paradox, that undeniable admiration – sometimes obsession – for muscly men in spray-on spandex, running around doing terribly butch things. It's like the irony of the armed forces; institutionally homophobic yet it's a great place to be surrounded by and to show off to other men.

Anyway, **Rawhide Kid: Slap Leather** is a comic that finally flings open the closet doors and embraces that male adolescent paranoia; "Am I or aren't I?" Or could it just be taking the piss?

You never know, perhaps one day we'll find out that Matt Murdock's into bondage and Peter Parker (unbeknown to his easily shocked aunt) secretly shoots a sticky fluid from his wrist.

Overviewing the Ultimates

Comment by Julian Dass, Barnsley, West Yorkshire

I DECIDED to hold off looking at **The Ultimates** until it had a few issues under its belt. But, despite my bigoted aversion to the slick, movie-pitch-style presentation, I find my bunkered preconceptions of gung-ho flag-waving shuffling off to one side, as I was quite engaged and entertained.

The new Nick Fury looks to be an indirect take on the Black Panther and begs an obvious comparison with Colin Powell in a post-Hulk rampage/September 11th USA, but, in the issues I've seen, the character hasn't developed much.

Captain America worked well as an anachronism, it was logical for him to be completely out of touch with the 21st century but still applying his absolutely rigid moral code. Yet, arguably, he's oddly politically correct with the anti-wife-beating stance, an issue which 60 years ago was considered to be something strictly between husband and wife. Still, he has no qualms about kicking a defenceless bloke in the head, which showed that it's not the use of violence he has any qualms about, so he's not a wishy-washy pinko PC, just the proper type of PC.

Cap's "tactical" brilliance was also mentioned, but I noticed in issue #9 that he went out of his way to make Henry Pym grow so he could beat him up.. fairly. Why? Surely, looking at it tactically, that's dumb. He should have at least had total air superiority, a couple of bunker busters backed up by cruise missiles, overwhelming fire-power and used night-vision goggles to attack Pym in the dark, anything else would have been dicing with defeat and tactically stupid.

The actual abuse between Henry and Janet Pym worked in a number of ways, the violence of it being appropriately horrible. But the scenario appeared cleverly layered and could be interpreted a few different ways. The sight of him spraying her with a chemical insecticide and her running away naked; "How does that feel, Jan? Is that burning your skin? I bet it feels like napalm or something," immediately brought to mind the

images of the Vietnamese girl running naked down the road being burned by napalm during the Vietnam War. "You shouldn't have made the giant look small, little Asian girl."

Portraying Pym and Banner as intellectual inadequates seemed too much of an overworked cliché; I see more and more intellectually challenged inadequates, who appear just as dangerous as the brainy ones on the TV lately. But then maybe the "winner versus loser" angle works – the overwhelming pressure to be a winner, the unbearable taste of failure being the implied testament that God isn't keen on you because he hasn't blessed you with a winner's medal.

Banner's pleading that the Hulk was only recreated as a menace so they could all come together to fight made me wonder if Zbigniew Brzezinski is now claiming a similar thing. (Brzezinski was President Carter's National Security Advisor who initiated the CIA's eventual $4billion expenditure on Operation Cyclone, the establishment of an Islamic terrorist movement in Central Asia intended to "destabilise" the USSR's central Asian borders.)

Jarvis's cameos as a camp, post-middle-aged Englishman were hilarious; it kind of embodies a certain, usually American, view of Britain as crumbly, cynical, drunk and degenerate, pining for a lost Empire. Nobody loves ya when you're old and gay, Jarv.

Thor as a new-age hippy made me smile, but *why a hippy?* Other than having long hair and beards, Dark Age Vikings aren't remembered for their eco-friendly activities. I'd have pegged the Norse god of thunder as more your piratical-drunken-rapacious-extortionist-brawler type. In fact, much more like Millar's take on the Hulk. Perhaps Thor is just a looney with a big hammer?

Tony Stark: inoperable brain tumour makes billionaire playboy see the light? Not sure whether that's a deft piece of spin to stop people questioning his motives, those industrialist types will say anything to get their own way. Stark was originally an armaments manufacturer (is he still such in Millarworld?) and I think I would have liked to see a bit more about the amorality of the economics in the arms trade; if you sell arms to a certain group, whichever group feels threatened by those arms has to buy its own in order to counter the other's new weapons.

Arms have always been the capitalist wet dream; sales bring about more sales – the law of supply and demand doesn't work with guns. Since the end of WWII small arms have been responsible for the deaths of millions. So would that qualify Stark as a manufacturer and distributor of weapons of mass destruction? Or maybe the tin suits are prototypes for downloading his consciousness into an android body – Stark Immortality plc? Nah, he'll eventually become a reclusive voyeur, declining to cut his hair and only employing Mormons because they're very clean people.

I've missed a couple of issues but I've seen the comments about the introduction of David Icke's lizard-men being the ultimate enemy. I don't know what to think about that yet. Icke is known to be popular with some anti-Semitic white supremacist groups, apparently whenever Icke writes "baby-eating-giant-humanoid-lizard-with-millenia-old-plan-for-ruling-the-world" they substitute the word "Jew".

On hazy first impressions, it appears Millarworld "lizard-man" could be substituted with "Arab" or "Iraqi" or "Islamic terrorist", which makes me as uncomfortable as the interpretation of Icke's lizards. Still, I like to be conscious of these things so I'm not sucked in and subliminally influenced (I've been watching way too much of *Darren Brown's Mind Control*). . then again, how would I know whether I've been subliminally influenced or not?

Here's a guess at further plot developments in **The Ultimates**: there's a big battle between The Ultimates and the giant lizards and The Ultimates win. Naturally. However, it turns out that Stark Industries really only wanted to firm up its control on the lizard's tech resources, so The Ultimates install some new leader lizards who'll play the resource sharing game exactly as Stark wants it played, even though it was Stark who installed and supported those now-deposed tyrannical despot lizards in the first place.

Everybody lives happily ever after and almost everybody forgets it was achieved on a raft of dead and mutilated male, female and infant lizards, bearing in mind that 40% of the lizard population is younger than fifteen.

If I were a lizard, I wouldn't be keen on sacrificing my own child lizard, whatever the circumstances. Would you? Maybe lizards think differently? However, some of the surviving tyrannical despotic lizards wait, bide their time again and plot a terrible re-revenge.

I may be wrong and, because I can't do anything else, I await further instalments.

Why, they're just like us!

Comment by Adam Paga, Huddersfield, Yorkshire

I AM writing to give a big thank you to the comic artists and writers of Great Britain. For the past few years now I have been attending comic conventions in the north and have enjoyed them greatly but what has made them truly memorable is being able to

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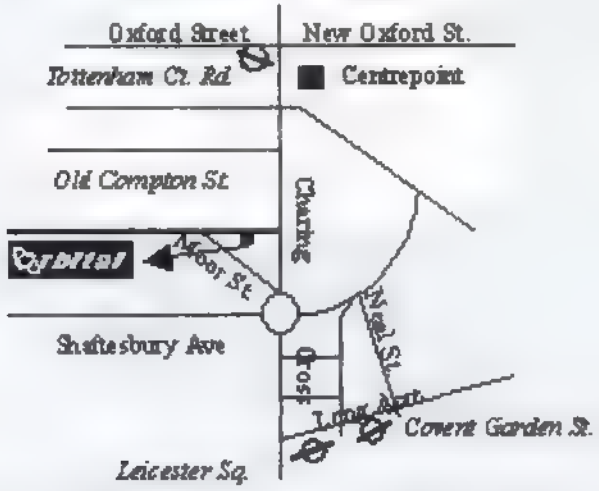

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meet and talk to the people who create the comics that I diligently purchase every week

They take time from their busy drawing and writing schedules to travel, sometimes great distances, to sketch and sign – often for free I don't know about anyone else but I consider this is a great privilege They spend time encouraging the next generation of comics creators and put up with the old yet still hopefuls like me

It's great to find out that these guys and sometimes girls are just like us. They have projects that they want to do, they get a thrill out of working with a comic legend and they eat bacon sandwiches for breakfast

I recently had an opportunity to meet my personal art hero Phil Winslade in Manchester and then again in Leeds, and have to say that he is one of the most genuine and nice men that it has been my pleasure to meet

Thank you all for your time, every one of you who ever attended a convention

And. . PHIL WINSLADE FOR PRIME MINISTER!

On DF comics and condoms!

Comment by Richard Domar, Wolverhampton

I SAW the advert about comics on QVC (CI #157, page 7), so gave it a look-see on Monday 31st March

After only 10 minutes, I thought I ought to be watching this show drunk as I rarely, if ever, make phone calls if I'm drunk. But, being sober, I nearly wasted a ton on an **Ultimate Spider-Man** 1/2 with a Stan Lee signature

That's £15 for the comic and £85 for a felt tipped mess on the cover, passing as an autograph

Nick Barrucci's spiel and presentation was quite outstanding and very convincing, which is why I very nearly got sucked in.

The guy is a real showman, and I suppose he made a boring show exceptional and good viewing with such an over-the-top performance. His energy made me want to buy something Anything. That's how persuasive he was, but thankfully I kept my hands off the phone

I can't help but wonder how many collectors got swept away and wasted their money on overpriced goods and comics

But this is just my opinion There wasn't a single item offered in the two hours that I felt was worth the QVC price. Barrucci made everything extremely plausible by quoting his site prices, "This book is £X or this is £Y on its own" and "You're saving £Z, and there's autographs, etc" It was all very attractive, but looking at some of the lots, or those that I could see, many are little more than 10p items at most comic marts

I read someplace about Barrucci and Dynamic Forces. That he was a comics collector who wanted to see something interesting in his collection, signed comics and suchlike Weird or strange, I gather that's how he came up with the idea of Dynamic Forces, to offer signed comics to people who couldn't get to conventions If he wanted something unusual in his collection he figured others would too. OK, there's nothing wrong with that. There's probably nothing wrong with the price structure either, but to me it looked high, like the books were four times their normal retail price

But what I've never been able to fathom is how you can have an exclusive comic if there are 5000 of them made. I figure that's 25% of the average title's print run Exclusive? No. Expensive? Yes

Another thing I can't understand is why Yanks get such a hard-on for autographed covers Basically, they're a mess on the cover that could easily be described as "writing on cover" American dealers cringe at the thought of such things on covers as price stickers, but a felt tipped signature is OK. When I once mentioned stickers to a US dealer the guy said our dealers must be "fucking retarded and should be strung up"

He added that any so-called dealer using stickers shouldn't be involved in selling comics. Which I would agree about

A name on a cover though? The guy said if it's by a creator, it's OK, although he wasn't that happy about it. He suggested the signatures could be on the first page of the comic so that the cover wouldn't be ruined A good idea, I think

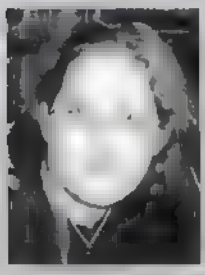
Of course Dynamic Forces is apparently quite successful, so there must be a lot of people who like cover blotches. Good luck to them

A possible reply is that a decision has to be made beforehand about doing a particular book, poster, trading card, or maybe try something new like condoms for geeks or vibrators for the female collector as a DF exclusive. Then obtain 5000 or whatever number (wholesale?) and pay the creator in question, produce a certificate and number each one, add a backer and bag, and seal them. All expenses that have to be covered, along with a whoppin' (my term) profit margin to make lots of money which allow for all the unsolds Anything unsold, offer on QVC

To which I'd say that it's quite possible that the additional "purchases", whether it's 500 or 5000 of a particular comic might be the only reason it's still published

Finally, I'd say a signature in a nice package is hardly a scarce item when there are so many of the damn things about!

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER



The mild-mannered creator/writer of the Internet's original comics industry rumour and news column has outraged many a publisher and survived more than one change of website But, despite several attempts to stop it, the Squiddy Award-winning gutterpress site continues to thrive, with over 20,000 hits a week at its new home of www.comicbookresources.com

From his unique vantage point, Rich often scoops the industry newshounds with his stories. Here are the highlights from this month's Gutter...

Post Alan Moore

So what happens to ABC Comics after Alan Moore retires? The common assumption is that the line will be shut down, but it appears there may be occasional forays for the creative teams. *An Apolocalypse of the ABC* story to finish off the line is expected – Promethea is already lining up for the title character to be involved in the end of the world. After that, it's possible that involved creators may be able to do 'historical' stories, set in the ABC universe's past.

As for other projects from Alan, there has been talk of a new graphic novel or series about magic, possibly with Steve Moore. There's still the previously announced second novel, **A Grammar**. Moore's also recently been writing pop songs for a female singer and his friend and CD collaborator Tim Perkins, which may see commercial release. Sadly, the previously announced **The Disco Cabala** project is unofficially dead.

After his last ABC books are finished, we may also see the **Small Killing** team of Alan Moore and Oscar Zarate reunite on a new project. As always, everything may – and usually does – change.

Truth Hurts

Apparently Spike Lee's company has been trying to get the film rights to **Captain America: The Truth**. However, after Marvel was legally obliged to divulge that the suit with Joe Simon is still ongoing, Spike Lee's people felt they had to pass.

Leotards Out!

Before long-time DC editor Andy Helfer was dropped from Team Didio, he'd been working up a non-costume superhero line for DC. Sadly, he was hoist by his own petard. Concentration on the line without the titles actually being published turned out to contribute to the decision to let Andy go. Almost all the titles will now not be published. Almost.

A Self-Aware DC Universe?

Grant Morrison has been espousing his theories on comics, magic and the end of the world at the recent sold-out talk at the Institute Of Contempory Art in London.

Interviewed by Man-At-The-Crossroads Paul Gravett, Grant talked about his upbringing (a comics reading mother, a sci-fi pulp reading father), his memories of **Flash** stories about his transformation into a paving stone, a puppet, or surrounded by green, and whether or not Grant killed creator Jon Broome when he met him years later.

As well as mentioning that Frank Quitely's next series after **New X-Men** will be a creator-owned project from the two of them, Morrison talked about the basics of life. How it arises from complex systems and how comics continuity has become so complex as to support sentience. He expressed his intent to create a comic so complex that it becomes a living self-aware being, as well as bringing that same aspect to the DC Universe, wanting to make the DC Universe realise that it's alive. He didn't appear to be joking. Morrison

continued on next page...

Networks

Comics news and gossip on the Internet

Compiled by Chris Rice and the CI team of Netmites

Net sightings

Nothing to Crow About

There have been many unusual items sold on internet site eBay over the past few years, but ***The Crow*** *fans and completists must have been surprised to find the following item listed in mid-March:*

Well, here's a collectible! This is a three page hand-written letter to me from James O'Barr, (creator of **The Crow**) – dated Oct. 24,'91. In it he asks me to marry him. Won't go on about how saying 'yes' was probably not the smartest thing I ever did in my life

Anyway, you get the original letter, the envelope it came in, and all these little pieces of paper he got from a Doritos package that he threw in for whatever reason! An interesting little item for those **Crow** fans who thought they had everything!

O'Barr's ex-wife also auctioned a hand-drawn birthday card that he'd given to her English mother, and you get the feeling there was little love lost between the two – the front illustration was of a bloody hacksaw, and the legend "Hey Mum, I know how shy the English are about revealing their age, so... I thought we could saw you in half and count the rings. Only Joking! Happy '29th' "

The letter sold for a princely $64.

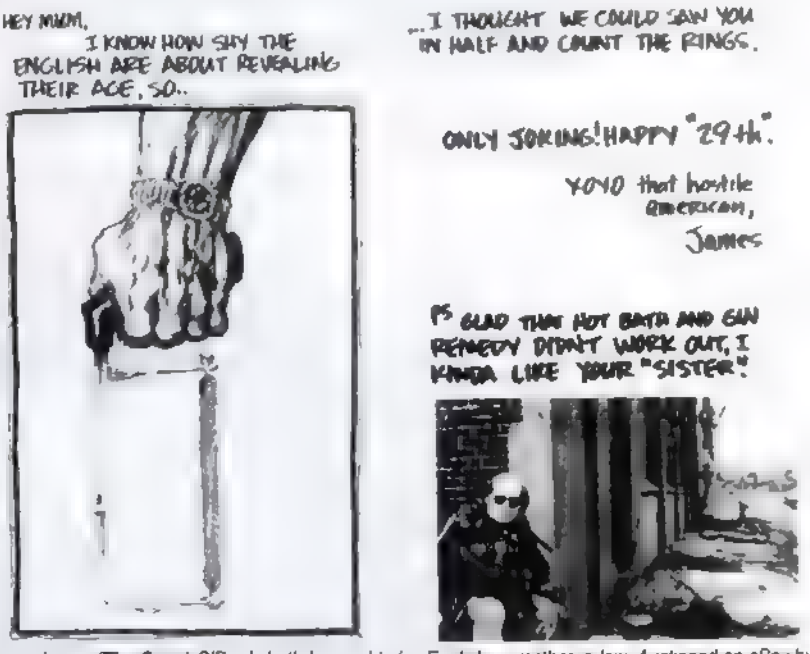
'80s Nostalgia Merry Go-Round

There's been a lot of gossip online this month about the various retro-toy-inspired comicbooks and the studios that produce them. Kicking it off was a persistent rumour that Dreamwave Studios was about to lose the Transformers licence to Devil's Due, producers of ***GI Joe****. No doubt it was sparked by the upcoming Devil's Due produced* ***GI Joe vs Transformers****, as well as reports that Hasbro wasn't happy with lateness, the generally dark tone of the books and the wholesale rewriting of history in Dreamwave's upcoming* ***Profiles*** *books.*

However, this seems to be all false, with Hasbro seemingly delighted at the job Pat Lee's studio has been doing. The ***Profiles*** *books have gone back to the drawing board however, and it appears they will now be a fairly straight-forward sourcebook.*

One title that is moving, however, is ***Masters of The Universe*** *which has shifted from Image to CrossGen. MV Studios, the company that produces it, has signed up to CrossGen's Code 6 imprint, depriving Image of one of its best-selling titles. The upcoming* ***Dragon's Lair*** *title will also be going across to CrossGen. The current* ***MOTU*** *title will finish with the sixth issue and then relaunch at CG in August, with the* ***Icons of Evil*** *series of one-shots moving over a couple of months earlier*

There have also been rumours of Top Cow moving to CG, but these have been refuted outright by Top Cow, probably


HEY MUM,
I KNOW HOW SHY THE ENGLISH ARE ABOUT REVEALING THEIR AGE, SO..
...I THOUGHT WE COULD SAW YOU IN HALF AND COUNT THE RINGS.
ONLY JOKING! HAPPY "29th".
YOYO that horrible American,
James
PS GLAD THAT HOT BATH AND GIN REMEDY DIDN'T WORK OUT, I KINDA LIKE YOUR "SISTER".

*Above James (**The Crow**) O'Barr's birthday card to his English ex-mother-in-law Auctioned on eBay by O'Barr's apparently bitter ex-wife, "As you can tell, James and my mother never did get along – okay truth be told, they hated each other. A whimsical collectible!" It sold for $39.*

much to the relief of Image, which also has an ex-employee about to face the courts for allegedly embezzling a very large amount of money from it.

Not everything is going CrossGen's way however, as Code 6 launch title ***The Red Star*** *is going independent again. This is part of an e-mail from the creators that our Rich published in his Gutter column on the* Comic Book Resources *site:*

The Red Star will once again be published independently under the Archangel Studios banner. We realised our relationship was driven more by mutual admiration than an underlying business need They weren't really making any money off us, nor could they provide services we really needed. So we parted as friends. Honest.

Speaking of **The Red Star**, though, we do hope to announce some fairly cool news soon. The deal ain't finalised just yet so I'll have to leave it at that. Oh, and we're launching a new series called **Assassin** this July.

CrossGen still seems to be edging towards that 10% market-share though. Networks *is expecting to see them in the front of* ***Previews*** *very soon.*

Body Pearson

Jason Pearson, creator of the infamous ***Body Bags****, has been rumoured recently to have a new series coming from the Cliffhanger imprint at Wildstorm. He popped up recently to post the following on the* Jason Pearson Showcase *Yahoo group board:*

Okay, so I don't post as often as I should, but here I am. This one will be short this time. Let me set the record straight – There is no Cliffhanger series. It was mentioned once but that's all. The job for **Hellboy: Weird Tales** is a 12-page Liz Sherman story that I wrote and drew. It will be out in issue four. It was pushed back because of scheduling difficulties. I thought I could make it in time for issue two because I wanted to be in as early as I could but I was wrong

There's the 20-page section in the **Tesla Strong Jam** due out in May or June and there's a four-pager in **Action Comics** 805. I was helping out Pascual

Right now, I'm working on a 12-pager that Geoff Johns wrote and then there will be the **Global Frequency** issue. I haven't been given the script yet, but I am expecting it pretty soon.

After that I'm taking it one job at a time until I get on a monthly. You heard me! Monthly! I did it once and I can do it again. People are saying I can't do it. Well, keep on saying it. It's just fuel for the fire as far as I'm concerned. So now you heard it from the horse's mouth.

Networks *is particularly glad to hear all this, as we've always been huge fans of the vastly underrated Pearson.*

Oops!

Networks *recounted the, um, 'news' that Nigel Kitching and Richard Piers Rayner were about to take over* ***Agent X*** *in last month's* ***CI****, after Alan Donald broke the news in his* All The Rage *column. The following week however, Mr Donald printed a letter from Mr Kitching.*

It appears the whole story was blatantly untrue, and Kitching was curious as to how such a specific rumour had come about. Donald, naturally, couldn't reveal his sources, but it would appear that the whole thing was a case of an un-named individual concocting the rumour about two writers he liked with ***X-Men*** *contracts to see how far it would spread. Some person with far too much time on their hands obviously*

In the meantime, ***Agent X*** *has now been cancelled, and will end with issue 12*

.. Which is probably a blessing considering the quality of the first couple of issues post-Gail Simone.

Internet comic, e-zine and website reviews

GENE COLAN'S VIRTUAL STUDIO *www.genecolan.com*

Elder comics statesman Colan's website is chock full of just about everything you could possibly ever want to know about the great man. A massive database lists every piece of comics artwork including covers and there is a gallery of his fine art. Original pages are on sale alongside Mr. Colan's regular column, *Drawing with Words*. Easy to navigate and throroughly absorbing, you could find yourself losing a few hours here. (TP) **8**

THE STRANGENESS OF BRENDAN MCCARTHY *www. 2000ad.nu/brendan-mccarthy*

OK, so ex-**2000 AD** and Vertigo artist Brendan McCarthy may have traded comics for movies but aficionados of this multimedia maestro will love this beautiful looking fan-site. Crammed full of exclusive paintings it not only lists all his comicbook work but also all the film concept and storyboard work he's done. Look out for the long-time Peter Milligan collaborator to make it huge this year as Brendan is co-writing *Mad Max 4: Fury Road* with director George Miller. (TP) **7**

CROSSGEN *www comicsontheweb.com*

Seriously slick, this flash – in every sense of the word – site shows how comics on the 'Net can really work. All of CrossGen's titles are available for a monthly $2 subscription fee with a few freebies thrown in. The pages are amazingly malliable and can be viewed in colour or black and white, with balloons (which enlarge to a readable size when rolled over) or without, and have a zoom function. **The Sojourn** prequel even has audio for the hard of reading. If you're prepared to stump up $120 you can have access to the whole CrossGen line for life Marvel.com could learn a trick or two from these guys. (TP) **9**

Review Panel: Chris Bunting (CEB), Tom McSweep (TM) and Tim Pilcher (TP)

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

continued from previous page

mentioned he has a computer game coming out later this year, that Mark Millar has been banned from writing DC Thompson comics forever after trying to get a team of soldiers including Private Parts and Gunner Rea into a **Commando** script, and how artist Brendan McCarthy pitched a revival concept to **2000 AD**. Basically Robot Archie reinvented as Robot Andy, based on Andy Warhol, and existing as in immobile lump of metal found by different people each week, influencing their lives often for the worse.

Grant also seemed to express some dissatisfaction with the art on the **New X-Men**, when he'd written scripts to suit Frank Quitely, for them to be drawn by someone else. And while he says he tailors dialogue after the art has been finished to better suit the result, "some people can't even be tailored to."

He also talked at length about his voodoo experiences with the Scorpion Loa, who told him to get a scorpion tattoo on his spine. And did he? "Did I fuck, would you trust a six foot scorpion?" Not me, Grant, not me.

Tit For Tat

Mark Millar and Frank Quitely's story *Tit For Tat*, from the upcoming **411** comic, is published in full at **Marvel.com**. It's an absorbing short story, suffering slightly for being more of an illustrated narrative than using the strengths of a comic, but it's certainly a quality piece of work describing sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and how one man tries to break the cycle of violence. Worth the price of admission.

So which person decided that this was the perfect place to run the fun-loving Irish-stereotypical Lucky Charms ad, followed by the ever-so relevant UCG – "Real Fighters. Real Fighting. The Ultimate Fighting Championship" game? Nice ad sales, guys.

An Unforgettable Introduction

Talking of **411**, Bill Jemas has refused to publish the original introduction by anti-nuclear activist Dr Helen Caldecott. She said, "When he read it, he got so angry that he threw it away and he refused to publish it. He said it's because I'm angry "

Shame, because it tackles a number of issues that Bill Jemas's own, and increasingly improving, Marville does. Dr Caldecott's intro read, "It was then that I realized that when the scent of blood metaphorically enters the male nostril, it triggers the psychological imperative to kill – a primitive autonomic reflex located in the male midbrain. This must be a relic of their Troglidaic days."

"The pathology of the primal killing reflex embedded in the primitive midbrain is legitimized at all levels of society. It is activated in the news by religious zealots, to justify their own freedom as opposed to others' (like the fundamentalist Christians that control the Republican party in the White House at the moment). It is used by commerce to sell films, video games, comics and books. It is used by governments to foster a spirit of intense patriotic support in a disparate and wavering constituency. And it is used by huge military corporations to encourage massive military spending throughout the world."

Read the full version at: *www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=6682* And make sure you think about Marvel while doing so.

Promotion and Resignation

Joel Ehrlich, one of the numerous DC vice presidents, has resigned. The former DC senior VP of advertising and promotions is now officially starting a new business. However, rumours have it that he was one of Jenette Kahn's boys and once she left it was only a matter of time before he followed.

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Commando Library

Rodelle Enterprises via e-mail: rodelle@optusnet.com.au

I'M becoming desperate in my search for information on, and hopefully a website dealing with, **Commando** comics. Can anyone also help me with information on a complete as possible list of all titles published.

*The Q&A Brains Trust's Steve Holland leaps in with. As you're on line, for **Commando** comics titles (including the classic issue 2348, "Bomb New York"!) check out:*

http://users.tinyonline.co.uk/vic2/www26255/home htm htm

*The best resource for information on **Commando** is Peter Richardson's expensive but worthwhile £15 **Achtung! Commando** magazine from Stiletto Books, 7 Bowman's Drive, Battle, East Sussex TN33 0LT. Or you can order #1-5 on-line via The Book Palace. Log on to:* www.bookpalace.com/acatalog/index.html *and type in Achtung in their search engine.*

Warlord

Mark Jarvis via e-mail: mark jarvis@boosey.com

A question for you concerning the 1970/'80s comic **Warlord.** There are two strips I remember from this boys war comic, an early one called *The Phantom Flyer* about a mysterious Spitfire that kept saving the day during the Battle of Britain and another later one called *Kampfgruppe Falken.*

Do you have any idea who wrote/drew these stories and what issues they appeared in?

*Steve Holland. My information on **Warlord** is sadly incomplete, but* The Phantom Flyer *(art by Keith Shone) was a one-off series which ran in #51-59 (13 Sep-8 Nov 1975)* Kampfgruppe

Mark Millar Youngblood revamp

Mark Currie via e-mail: mark@kjcomputers.co.uk

HAS there been a **Youngblood** revamp by Mark Millar? If so, how many issues?

Mike Conroy: Not yet and none so far are the short answers.

*Rob Liefeld has been touting **Youngblood: Bloodsport** on the Net for quite some time. Written by Mark Millar and drawn by the Image co-founder whose profile is rapidly going from industry bad boy supreme to Rob Who?, the three-parter was intended to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the team. Unsurprisingly for a Liefeld title, it's now over a year late.*

*Although the first two issues were solicited in **Diamond Previews** to ship last October and November from Arcade Comics – Liefeld's latest enterprise – the artist has since announced that the title is now not to be distributed through Diamond. What that means for the future of the series is anybody's guess.*

*Above Rob Liefeld art from **Youngblood: Bloodsport**, which writer Mark Millar says is "all the things I've never been able to do in **The Authority** It's super-AIDS viruses, appalling death and destruction on every page, but all done in the best possible taste, of course."*

Falken *was more typical of the Thomson comics and appeared in a number of series beginning around 1978 (it was in #211). Four series ran in 1979-82 (#252-267, 279-306, 329-?, 379-393); some episodes of these being drawn by Jim Watson.*

The series was revived in 1986 (#601-619), drawn by Mike Dorey.

Beryl the Peril

Mark Currie via e-mail: mark@kjcomputers.co.uk

DOES any reader know what issues of the **Funday Times** contained reprints of classic old **Beryl the Peril** comics similar to the ones that used to be reprinted in the early 1970s annuals? Who was the artist on these? When did these classic comics appear in **The Topper**?

Steve Holland yet again: I don't have information on the **Funday Times**, *but the majority of the strips in the* **Beryl the Peril Annual** *were reprints of David Law strips from the weekly* **Topper**. *Law drew the strip from its inception (Feb 1953) until #912 (July 1970) and, if the artwork is the same, it seems likely that the* **Funday Times** *also reprinted from that era of* **The Topper**

Answer Updates

Readers provide answers for previous issues' questions

Punisher letter

Tristan Carlyon, 17 Forest Lodge, Dartmouth Road, London SE23

WITH regard to El Sloano's question in #154, I think this is letter to which he was referring. It's from **Punisher** #19. I can honestly say that in 20 years of reading comics this is the only letter of comment that's stuck in my mind. Enjoy (if that's the word)...

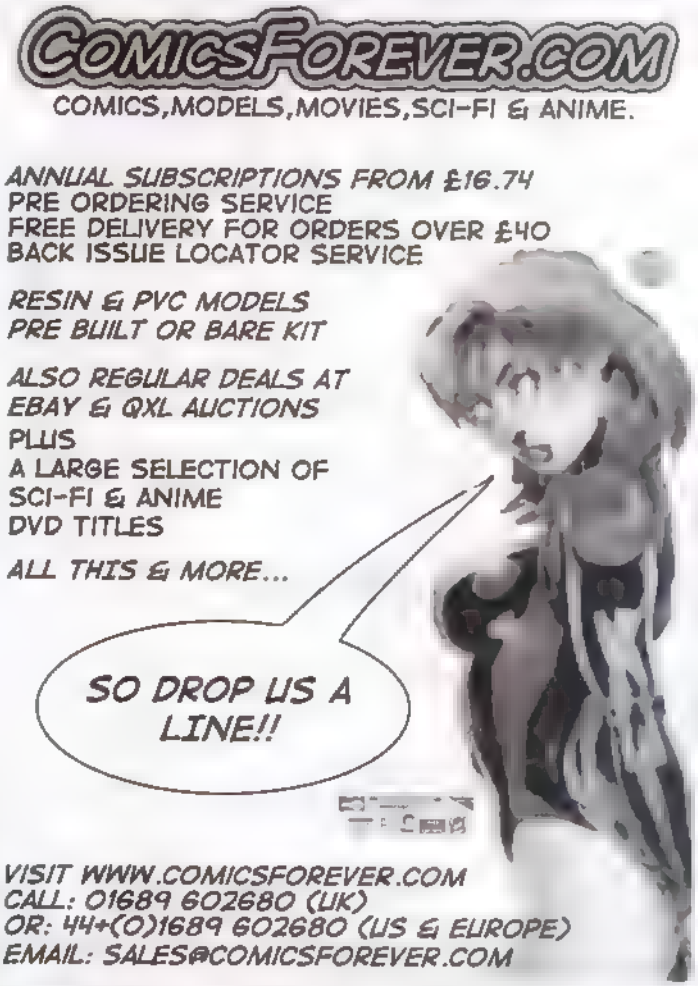
Dear Editors,

My name is Cliff M.O.A. Mineau. M.O.A. stands for Man Of Action—that's what my friends call me after beating the c**p out of two drug dealers about three years ago. They were giving dope to two 17 year-olds. I'm very Anti-Drug. It was happening in a cemetary in my town. They said, "What the blank do you want?" I said, "Your blanken heads you lousy stinken son of a blanked dope dealers." I beat the living c**p out of them. I used Karate and other special skills, and said "get the blespin' h**l out of this town—if you come back, you're dead! As long as I'm living here you're not going to poison any more kids with your drugs." I also stopped a dope deal in one of your parking lots. You could call me a vigilante but I would just call me someone who cares. I've been reading the PUNISHER for eight years, and I love him. He's Action Violence, but I wish the writer, Mike Baron, would put more Drug stories in the book. That's the biggest problem in the U.S.A. but it seems like no one cares anymore. If all our towns would join together to fight we could push out the drug dealers. I'm 23 and never touched drugs. My family is all anti-drug and we lived in a drug infested town (in Massachusettes) for 17 years. I don't smoke or drink. I collect action-filled comics—Punisher is #1! He's similar to my favorite action paperback hero the Executioner but you need a little more action. PUNISHER #3 has a car chase—alright—but why did you make those hoods blow up the police? They're good guys. If you're going to make a cover, put that part in the book, please.

I'm a sucker for a good explosion. I wrote a book about 3 times three years ago and it still hasn't been published. It's called Knife Huntress, Destroyer of Drug Dealers. It's about five women vigilantes that take on 60,000 dope dealers. All gore and action—I've got a copy on tape. If you want to hear it let me know and I'll send it to you so you can tell me if you want to use it. I heard the PUNISHER might become an action show on TV. I've got the perfect actor—Sam Jones, from the HIGHWAYMAN TV series, now cancelled. We need more action shows about vigilantes, action heroes, etc. to show people how to fight back against drugs and crime. Make the Punisher fight dope dealers for two, maybe three issues and have him shooting the c**p out of a copter and have it crashing into a trailer full of crack sending them both into a deep canyon, turning the drugs into ashes along with the dope dealers and have him saving the kids of that town. You'd be surprised at how many issues you'd sell. Well, thanks for reading my letter.

Clifford M.O.A. Mineau
3 Dora Street
Ware, MA 01802

Um. . .no comment.



Movers & Shakers

The latest comicbook views, speculations, gossip and rumours

Reported by those diggers and delvers ITMA and the CI team of ITMites

Shame by you English?

AH, THE joys of translation. Even since the Japanese edition of John Steinbeck's classic **The Grapes of Wrath** was adapted as **The Angry Raisins** and the Coca Cola name was translated into Chinese as, "female horse stuffed with wax," great glitches still occur.

Movers used the Google translator for the French website **The Comic Strip** with its *Comics and Comic strips adapted to the Cinema* page. DC veteran Mort Weisinger translated as Died Weisinger – for his 1940s *Vigilante* work, while artist Mort Meskin Jr comes up as "Dead Meskin Jr".

Look out, John Jones

FOLLOWING on from AOL/Time Warner's record corporate losses, obvious money-making schemes are already rearing their ugly heads over at subsidiary company DC Comics.

The recently collected **Batman: Bruce Wayne Fugitive** trades are sporting tiny trademark TMs after the vigilante philanthropists' name. Does this now the 30-odd Bruce Waynes we tracked down in this country have got to fork out cash to DC every time they use their name?

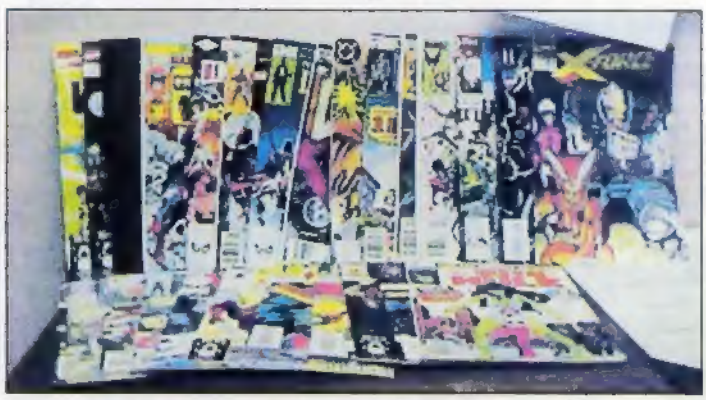
Only recently a veteran music journalist named Bill Wyman had a "cease and desist" order placed on using his name, even though he predated the ex-Rolling Stones bassist, who was born William George Perks. So the legal precedent is set and you have been warned, All of you Hal Jordans, Diana Princes, Clark Kents and Mr. Mxyzptplks, be on guard!

Pizza paper boost

PANINI UK, listen up: eight weeks ago **Repubblica**, one of Italy's top newspapers, started a weekly books collection. Every week with the newspaper, for an extra €4.90 (£3), readers get a deluxe 270-300 page comics book. So far the content has included: Corto Maltese, Tex, Spider-Man, Donald Duck, Dylan Dog, Peanuts, Diabolik and Daredevil.

The first issue, **Corto Maltese**, sold 900,000 copies; the second, **Tex**, sold 450,000. The others are selling around 400,000 each. This 30 issue collection is proof comics can sell massive, if 'official' media endorse them. Luca Raffaelli and Panini Comics are producing **I Classici Del Fumetto** – the title of the series – and editor Raffaelli said, "If just 5% are still buying comics after this series it will be a success. That would be 20,000 new comicbooks readers."

If we could get that kind of response, we may even get to press that *General Jumbo invades Iraq* project after all...



*CREDIT cards at the ready, please. April 2 saw the posting on eBay of this real Gaza Strip mix of 92 #1s and first appearances from 1938 to 1995 by "xtci" with a zero seller rating. He wanted $1.5 million for the lot, which include **Action Comics #1**, **Detective Comics #1 & #27**, plus first issues of **Omega, Punisher 2099, Spider-Man 2099, Cyber Force, X-Factor, Quasar, Nova, X-Force, Silver Sable, Spider Woman, Firestar, Maxx, New Warriors, She Hulk, Human Fly, Darkhawk, Red Sonja** and **Rom**. He settled the next day for $1.2 million (excluding postage and packing). Then a week later, the same lot appeared again. Would we be cynical in saying it's a scam? That the buyer(s) don't exist and it's an imaginative way for somebody to boost their "Power Seller" rating?*

*Here's a funny thing: Ever heard of **Miracleman Gold #1**? Somebody has. A copy sold in Portland, Oregon last year for $1,500. There's also a Blue Edition selling for almost $600.*

*So what the bloody hell are they, you cry. The answer is they're a very expensive piece of beige paper and a scribbled signature on the splash page of the regular **Miracleman #1**.*

Eclipse publisher Dean Mullaney got Alan Moore to sign with a gold pen a limited quantity (apparently, they weren't numbered!) of #1 for the San Diego '85 convention. These are the Gold Editions. Mullaney, partner Cat Yronwode and Stan Sakai signed another batch in blue ink. These are numbered (but no total quantity mentioned) and are the Blue Editions. Make of it what you will, but don't mention them to the slabbing fraternity, please.

And if Mullaney, Ironwode and Sakai can justify an edition, perhaps it's time for a Red Edition, signed by the title's real editor. £3.50, anybody?

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Letters

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Another extended letters column this issue. Perhaps the increased volume of mail for this, Q&A and Comment is some sort of reaction to the decreasing number of comics that actually care about your opinions. As always, we operate our level playing field approach, so send us compliments or criticisms, about others' titles or our own magazine and, provided they're intereresting, we'll do our best to fit them in.

But if you're going to send visuals intended for publication, do us a a favour please. Don't fold them over. As much fun as it is, it takes hours in Photoshop to cover up those creases!

...Dez Skinn/editor

Not-so-trusty-brains

Simon R. Green via e-mail: Simon@shadowsfall.demon.co.uk

YOU very kindly printed a letter of mine in *Q&A* **CI**#155, where I was trying to identify strange old DC comics from the '60s.

I have to say that *absolutely no-one* contacted me with any information. I have to wonder now; did these comics ever really exist? Was it all just a dream? Or was it (choke) an imaginary tale?

Since the mighty Brains Trust that is **CI** and its readership has failed me, if anyone knows of sites on the Net that might be worth trying for answers to DC Silver Age trivia questions, perhaps they could let me know?

Excited no more: 2

Peter Barnett via e-mail: mail@barnett123.fsnet.co.uk

I FOUND two things in particular worthy of comment in **CI** #157. The first was the second paragraph of David Bishop's sign-off letter, headed "Excited no more!" How many of us can identify with that?

At the risk of sounding like a boring, middle-aged nostalgia buff, I have to say – along with Bishop – that today's comics don't have the attraction they did when the likes of Lee, Kirby, Schwartz, Infantino and Kane were at the helm. I guess it's a combination of a generational thing, and the overkill of today's maket – do we really need so many X, Spidey and Bat books each month?

For goodness' sake, where do we expect kids to start collecting these days? And comics seemed to be so much better when there were only three or four names in the credits box, rather than 14!

When Grant Morrison's run on **JLA** ended a couple of years ago, I came to the same conclusion as Bishop, and now spend my hard-earned exclusively on filling the gaps in my Silver Age collection.

Which brings me in a round-about way to my second point, which is in response to the comment from Julian Dass (**CI**#157) who seems to think that the good guys always have everything their own way in a black and white world. May I suggest that Dass look up some Silver Age (particularly Marvel) comics, whose heroes generally defeated or thwarted their opponents – yes – but who often had intense personal problems as well, and lived in a world where not everything in the garden was rosy.

DC caught up on this aspect with a vengeance in the '80s, with the deaths of major characters the Flash (a personal favourite of mine) and Supergirl. Not to mention a particularly poigniant story of Starfire of the New Teen Titans in Apartheid South Africa, where the heroine ended up feeling helpless in the struggle for human rights, despite winning her own personal battle.

Perhaps Hollywood's depiction of heroes does oversimplify things, but one of the first things that attracted me to comics some 30 years ago was the sight of heroes dedicated to the cause of justice (yes, DC's original **Justice League** is another all-time favourite) over and against the "might is right" philosophy.

Competition grumble

Tim Barnes via e-mail

WHY do you insist on people cutting chunks of their **CI**s to enter competitions?

Having spent good money on each issue, I'm certainly not chopping the thing to pieces – but I'm unhappy that this means I'm barred from your competitions...

Life can be so cruel at times, Tim.

A potted history?

Trevor Hill via e-mail: hill.trevor@virgin.net

JUST taking a quick time-out from my studies to write to you.

Something I'd like to see in **CI** is a potted history of some of the comics companies no longer with us. Perhaps a different company each issue. You could almost think of it as an extension to *Q&A*.

For instance, what's the story behind the short lived Atlas-Seaboard line that emerged in the mid-1970s? Who started the company, and why did it only last a few issues?

Or, why did Malibu merge with Marvel. And are we ever likely to see any of its characters again?

Although this information is probably available in text books or on the Net, not everyone has these sources available to them.

I thought of this after reading in a fairly recent issue of **CI** that Charlton Comics may be making a comeback. Perhaps you could start with a history lesson about them?

Coincidentally, we received a feature on the history of Malibu very recently. So recently, in fact, that we haven't had a chance to read it yet. But if other readers echo your thoughts, we could have found a worthy successor to David Bishop's Beyond 2000 *column.* Before 2000, *anybody?*

New additions?

Alan Woollcombe via e-mail: alanwoollcombe@yahoo.com

THIRTEEN years on and still a good read – congratulations! Also good luck with your new **Toy Max International** – not quite my cup of Earl Grey (unless you're heavily into ancient reminiscences about Scalextric and Dinky toys, in which case I could become one of your principal contributors...) but nice to see anyhow.

Also nice to see an end to David Bishop's column, always by far the dullest section of the magazine for my taste. The space it frees up could be used in any variety of imaginative ways: a rotating guest column, a 'where are they now?' slot, a history page (preferably written by Steve Holland/Paul Gravett/Paul Gambaccini/Dr Martin "Toon" Goodman or someone else knowledgeable in more than just the latest news and views), a regular interview, lengthy obituaries and tributes... Almost anything in preference to another regular columnist, in fact.

As to a replacement strip, *Brother Matthew* featured a nice concept but didn't quite cut it for me – too wordy, too worthy, and it seemed to run forever. Assuming you were to devote an equal amount of space to the new strip(s), a showcase for small press material sounds a good idea in theory.

An awful lot would depend on the quality of what saw print – get an unpopular strip that ran for months and you'd have created your own negative zone. Maybe a

Mike Kazybrid's COMIC CUTS

Script by Paul Kristian

WELL, IT'S SUCH A FANTASTIC COLLECTION, I'M GOING TO TAKE A CHANCE. I'VE ALREADY SENT PAYMENT TO SECURE THE COMICS AND I'M TRAVELLING TO THE CHANNEL ISLANDS TOMORROW TO COLLECT THEM. THE GUY RECKONS HE BOUGHT THEM ALL NEW BACK IN THE '60s. SO WITH A BIT OF LUCK, I MAY HAVE DISCOVERED A 'NAMED COLLECTION'
IT'LL COST YOU A FORTUNE TO TRAVEL THERE. BUT IT'LL BE WORTH IT IF YOU'VE DISCOVERED ANOTHER 'MILE HIGH' COLLECTION
YEAH, MAYBE I'LL CALL IT THE GUERNSEY COLLECTION OR THE MIC BUFF COLLECTION!
SPLOSH!
THE FOLLOWING WEEK...
NEW - JUST ARRIVED IN STOCK! THE DIRTY, HUMID, INSECT-RIDDEN SHED COLLECTION
CAN

Send your script ideas to the above address and you receive the original art if yours is published.

page or two of three/four-panel strips along the lines of American newspapers, coupled with two pages of full/double page spreads of comicbook strips (stuff that wouldn't work in the letterbox format) with a mixture of old and new. This might be the way to appeal to the widest spectrum of readers. I can't wait to see what you come up with.

Finally, one minor gripe: as a subscriber, it's irritating to receive CI a few days after I see it in the shops, and doubly so when a full-page advert lists a TV comics auction for the day before my copy arrives – but after it was on sale in the shops.

On the postal problem... Couriers are more efficient than the Post Office. They get bulk packages to stores within 24 hours of despatch. That's why regular subscribers can see them in shops before they plonk through their letter boxes. We only started accepting subs for people who couldn't make it to comic shops. Then, when asked, we started first class subs in an attempt to get singles out quickly to those who really wanted them early. So it's really out of our hands – we send everything out at the same time, both single copies and bulk stock.

As for ***Toy Max****, I'm afraid it isn't about the old stuff any more than the recent inappropriately-named* ***Memorabilia*** *was. Instead, it has more of a laddish* ***Loaded*** *approach to cool 'n' sexy toys to maximise on newsstand racking rather than being shunted into the collector's corner alongside* ***Model Yatching Mart*** *and* ***Unperforated Stamp Quarterly****.*

While it's difficult to believe comics can achieve this aim in the current climate, we hope that by celebrating the fun aspects of toys, and flaunting the massive variety that are out there through in-your-face visuals and nerd-free text, we'll bring in new people who are not collectors but do like cool stuff.

End product: 50,000 newsstand, 10,000 in comics and toy shops, with record shops, supermarkets and garages soon to follow. Oh, we did feature the Simpsons Scalextric toys in #1 though!

Brother Matthew replacement: Yeah, I was hoping for a Sunday section kind of mix. Still waiting for the right offers though.

Small press spotlight

Chris Atkins via e-mail: chrisatkins@chrisatkins.free-online.co.uk

CHRIS Bunting's idea about producing an anthology of home grown comic strips is well worth pursuing. However, I reckon we have much bigger fish to fry.

I have yet to come up with a satisfactory plan that would culminate with the launch of a big deal British comic and, while I have not given up on my ambition to be the driving force of such a venture, I'm beginning to realise that mere involvement would be an achievement in itself.

I've praised **CI** on previous occasions for regularly reviewing small press titles and I believe that you realise that the independent sector is probably the last hope of a UK comics scene. There's an obvious thirst displayed in your pages for such a scene – IPC, Fleetway, DCT, a lot of reference to Marvel UK-originated work. It can't all be misty-eyed recollections.

In response to your request for feedback regarding a replacement for *Brother Matthew*, how about a small press 'spotlight' as a regular feature? You could choose from proposals and greatly raise the profile of many a deserving small presser. I understand you'd be wary of wading through crap to find the good stuff, but isn't that the nature of all modern media?

Besides, I'm sure your band of reviewers would willingly filter what I suspect would be a deluge of submissions.

Vote number two on said subject.

2000 AD

Justin Kyriakides via e-mail: Discarray@aol.com

IN response to Andy Doyle's letter in 157, regarding progs 1, 2 and 3 of **2000 AD**, I have always considered this title to be an investment, and not just the early issues. There are several reasons why and I list them in no particular order.

1) Considering the poor quality paper that the early issues were printed on, it's very hard to find high-grade issues. And near mint? Forget about it!

2) As the characters within the comic become more popular and eventually established in the culture – like Judge Dredd has – the issues where they first appeared will increase in value. You can pick up significant issues such as 149 (first Judge Death), 150 (first Cassandra Anderson), 780 (first Button Man), 981 (first Sinister Dexter) and 1035 (first Nikolai Dante) for a few pounds each, and they are sure to rise in value over the years.

3) The reason why American comics from the '50s, '60s and early-'70s are so expensive is that nobody realised their investment potential and so did not spend time and effort looking after and collecting them. The same is happening now with **2000 AD**, the few high-grade and mint copies of early issues are being snapped up on eBay at relatively low prices, since this is one of the few places where you can buy **2000 AD**, as comic shops don't tend to stock many early issues.

4) Finally, **2000 AD** has always been a stepping stone or starting point for new artists and writers, many of whom have since crossed the pond to America and launched very lucrative and successful careers. Once they've made a name for themselves – especially in the States – the price that they charge for their work goes up. As the artist gets older, then this is also true of back issues containing examples of their early work.

An example of this is the legendary Jack Kirby. Even when he was alive, copies of comics like **The Avengers**, containing samples of his work, demanded above average premiums, which weren't influenced by traditional factors like first appearances. When he died, the prices went sky high. I think we will see the same with many issues of **2000 AD**, which contain a veritable gold mine of early work by established and up and coming creators.

Grant Morrison: the great hairstyle affair

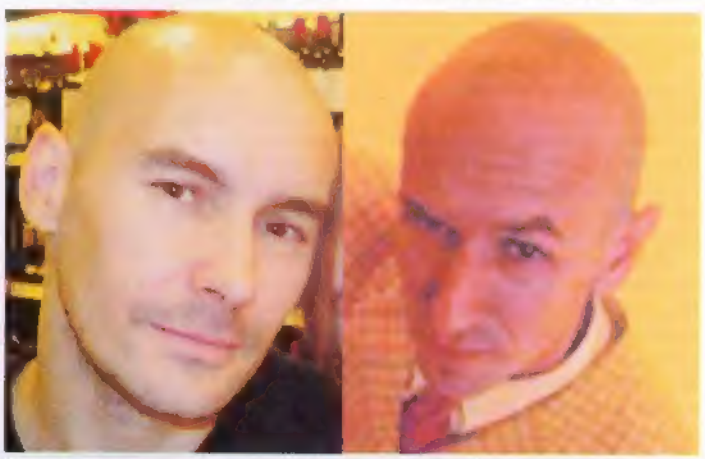
Paul Gravett, 44A Yukon Road, London SW12 9PX

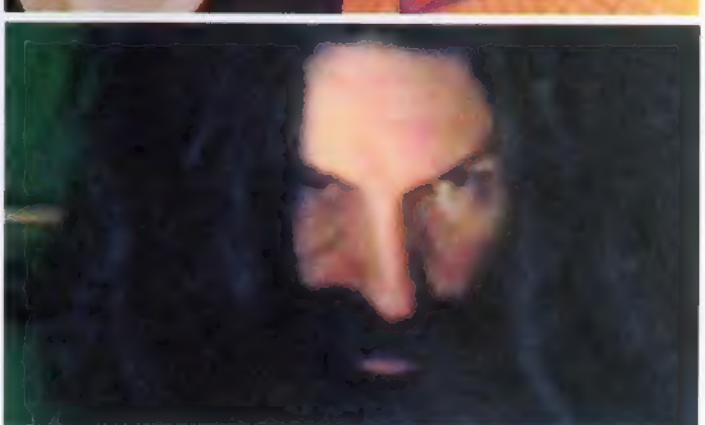
SAW your Grant Morrison lookalike piece (*Movers & Shakers*, CI #157) – here's an even better one!

I showed it to Grant last night at our ICA interview and he was shocked at the likeness to a teen him (*pictured above, with genuine young Morrison image inset*). Has Prada cloned him as an icon of coolness? This ad ran in **The New Yorker Magazine** a few weeks back.

Ever the trendsetter, Grant shaved off his mod locks a few years back, leading to the latest spate of lookalike gags. Below left is a recent Morrison mugshot set against last month's Movers *pic in close-up. It's lucky he chose to move with the times really.*

If he hadn't, the bottom visual shows how he could have ended up. Now, what chance would he have stood of becoming a leading US comics writer if he looked like that, eh?





To finish, I am in agreement with Andy Doyle that **2000 AD** Prog 2 has enormous investment potential and the one sold at Comic Book Postal Auctions for £551 is just the beginning.

Judge Dredd is set to go mega over the next few years, as his profile increases and he gains in popularity in the States, you will see the Yanks paying very high premiums for prog 2, as well as many other early high grade issues.

All valid points, Justin. But I'd argue that its the more recent issues which are the most difficult to acquire and present a wise investment. With the print run now at barely 10% of its quarter-million heyday, and most of those going straight into collections, finding recent issues out of stock at the publishers can be an absolute bugger!

Reprinting old British comics

Paul Scott via e-mail: paulvonscott@yahoo.co.uk

I KEEP picking up occasional comments that make me think Quality Communications might consider doing a comic, possibly a reprint comic of UK stuff.

I think the time is ripe for something like this, with a huge upsurge in interest in UK comics. Just look at the crazy prices for girls supernatural comic **Misty**!

If there was a magazine that came out in the format of **CI** – 100 pager, nice colour cover – with big wodges of *Steel Claw*, *Leopard of Lime Street*, *Doomlord*, *Monster* (an **Eagle** strip started by Moore and finished by Wagner/Grant) and the like, with articles and features on them, I'd buy it without a moment's hesitation. The amount of material currently neglected seems fairly massive.

Perhaps if it also devoted a portion of space to collecting British comics, with price guides, you might get additional buyers who are only interested in the comics as an invesment, there's a lot of those memorablia-style mags about these days.

I'm sure you have a better idea of what is commercially viable than me, and you have probably considered all of the above and dismissed it. But I can't see anyone else likely to do it, though kudos to **The Megazine** for reprinting some *Battle* strips.

You're right, Paul, I do have a hankering. But it's all a matter of priorities, viability assessment, rights availability, quality of origination... You know, all that dull stuff that gets in the way of having a good time.

The Mighty World of... Panini?

Kieron Mullens via e-mail: kieronmullens@blueyonder.co.uk

IT WAS fascinating to see in **CI** #157 a wealth of features on Marvel comics in the UK. Aside from its usual appearance in *Q&A*, the relaunch of **The Mighty World of Marvel** made the *News* (albeit as a self-confessed nostalgia piece by Rob Kirby), and it's praises were again sung by Tony Ingram in *Letters* (which also featured a request for a **Black Knight/Captain Britain** collection) and finally, in the *Comment* a suggestion for another series of collections featuring Marvel/Panini UK's homegrown *Dr Who* strip. Anybody would think that there was another 'Marvel Revolution' going on...

But seriously, while Marvel US titles are launched and relaunched ad nauseum, Panini UK has been quietly building up a respectable core of titles.

OK, with the exception of **Dr Who Magazine** and the **Spectacular Spider-Man** title for kids, none of them feature originated UK material, but that shouldn't be reason to ignore them. The two flagship titles that launched the current line – **Astonishing Spider-Man** and **Essential X-Men** – will celebrate their 100th issues in May, while **Avengers United** has just hit a quarter century by reprinting modern classics like the Busiek/Perez run and the excellent **Avengers Forever** maxi-series, backed by gems from the Thomas/Buscema/Palmer era.

Add to that well-written and insightful occasional background features and you have a bargain for only a couple of quid a month.

And yet, as someone who reads *Advance Listings* every issue (yes, we are out there!), the entries for Panini UK are sadly lacking. According to **CI**, **Essential X-Men** has been reprinting **Giant Sized X-Men #1** and **Uncanny X-Men** #358 for over two years now, which would mean that they're doing it at a rate of less than a page an issue. Worse still, **Avengers United**, **Ultimate Spider-Man** and **The Mighty World of Marvel** don't even get a mention. Come on, guys!

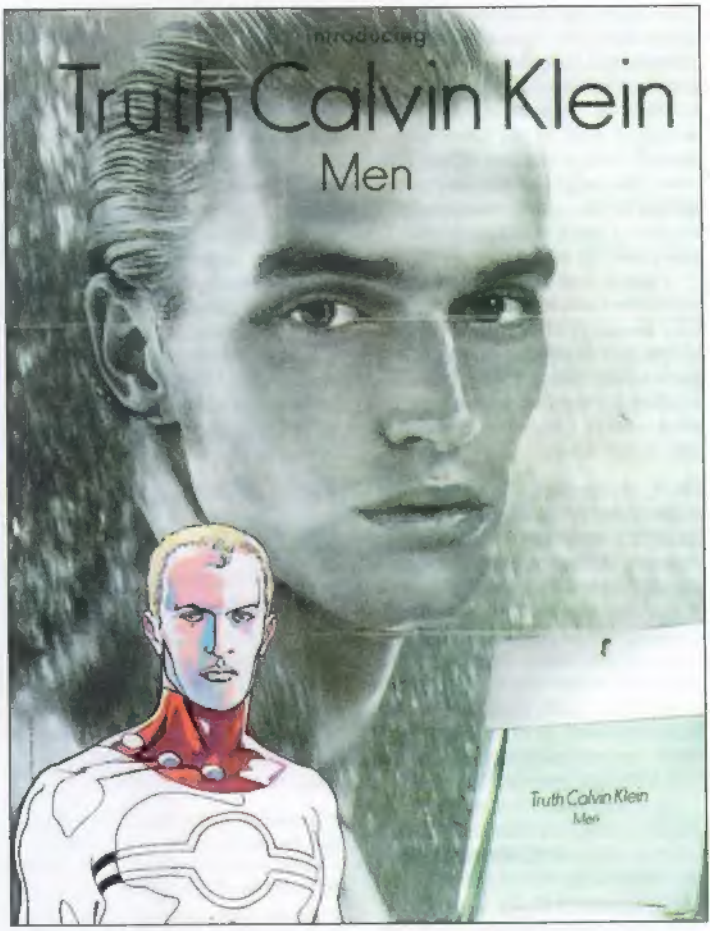
Like many, I'm awaiting Rob Kirby's guide to Marvel UK with great interest but why not ask him to contribute to **CI** more regularly?

To add to the comments regarding Marvel UK collections, I did raise the very same question with Scott Gray, Panini UK editor and current **Doctor Who** comic strip scribe. Sadly, no response as yet, but I'd agree that they're well overdue, not to mention a Marvel Universe collection featuring Mike Collins and Mark Farmer's **Spider-Man**, Dave Gibbons' **Hulk**, and Steve Dillon's early work on **Nick Fury** and **Ant-Man**.

On a final note, I've been reading **CI** pretty much since the beginning, although this is the first time I've been inspired to write. If anything, I find it even more essential than before, as I buy fewer comics but often base my 'chance' purchases on **CI** reviews or coverage.

And you haven't let me down yet!

Advance Listings: Marvel UK/Panini sadly give us no input so poor old Jim Hannah haunts newsagents shelves for information. His wrists have now been slapped.



Lookalike 2: Miracleman reveals the Truth for Calvin Klein

Dave Morton, 33 Holt Drive, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3HZ

I THOUGHT you and the **CI** readers might like to see this advert from **The Guardian Weekend** magazine, dated April 5.

It finally explains where Miracleman has been all this time – posing for Calvin Klein fragrances.

And what better name for said product than Truth (bwah-hah-hah)!

For anybody who came in late or those who can' no longer remember what Marvelman/Miracleman actually looks like, we've dropped a Barry Windsor-Smith sketch of ol' Kimota-man into the above advert that Dave sent us.

Talking of the Big Blue Cheese (you really shouldn't have started me off) MM fans have to check out the cool photo-manipulations (pictured below and right) that Seattle-based Mondo Joe has created for his website www.mondojoe.com.

We were particularly taken with the one below, featuring the upstart Brit reincarnation of Captain Marvel putting the original well and truly in his place.

Nice one, Joe.